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SERMONS,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY of GLASGOW.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A SERMON,

Preached before the PROVINCIAL SYNOD of MERSE
and TIVIODALE, in the Church of KELSO,
on *Tuesday, 27th April, 1790.*

Published at their Desire in this Volume.

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MINISTER of COLDSTREAM.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

THE Sermons contained in this Volume, were delivered before the University of Glasgow. If, in some particulars, they differ from the ordinary form of popular discourses, it is hoped that their original destination will plead my apology. Since my being ordained Minister of Coldstream, they have undergone a few alterations. Additions have been made to some of them, and others have been abridged.

The first four Sermons were preached from two texts, partly from the *Prayer*

A 2

of

of *Agur*, and partly from the proverbial observation of our Saviour, Luke, xviii. 25. that *It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

Whether, in some of the Discourses, I have not attempted a too minute description of character, must be left to the decision of those who shall take the trouble to peruse them. I would observe, in my defence, that in Discourses designed to be practically useful, there is a necessity for being particular in that respect. General declamations in praise of virtue and the virtuous, and general invectives against wickedness and the wicked, are of small value. Many, without any title, think themselves deserving of the one; and no person is so absurd as to deny, that there is a line of duty, by which we ought to regulate our conduct. All are willing to confess they are sinners, but
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apply nothing to their own case, which is common to the whole of their species.

If beneficial effects are to be produced by the eloquence of the pulpit, or by the writings of moralists, a different plan must be pursued. We must go into particulars. Characters, good and bad, must be accurately drawn from life. Manners must be pourtrayed as they exist in nature. The principles of human action must be defined, and their deficiency and redundancy must be pointed out, together with their appearances, simple and combined with one another. The ruling passion, the key which unlocks so many secrets of the heart, must be explained. A mirror must be held up to mankind, in which individuals may see their true shapes and forms, their beauty or ugliness, their personal advantages and disadvantages; and, in fine, that which constitutes them what they

they are, and distinguishes them from all others.

Skilful physicians, when called to a person in distress, endeavour, first of all, to discover the disease under which he labours. If there be various kinds of that disease, if it appear in different forms, which is most frequently the case, they next study to ascertain the species to which it belongs. This is not all. They enquire into the age, the habits, the occupation, the manner of living, and bodily constitution of their patient. They take under review every adventitious circumstance that may have occasioned or increased his malady; such as, the time of the year, the salubrity or unhealthiness of the season, the prevalence of similar disorders, and the like. From the conjunct intelligence thus sought for, and obtained, they, last of all, prescribe such remedies

as the particular case before them requires. It is by means like these, they are to be useful to the world, either in the line of their practice, or in communicating instruction to others of their own profession.

By an analogous plan of procedure, we are to arrive at the knowledge of our spiritual maladies and their cure. We are to investigate particular cases. Taking an individual for the subject of enquiry, we are first to find out the sin, to which he is chiefly addicted. We shall suppose it is *lying*. As liars differ so much from one another, that what may be said of some of them will not apply to others, we must, in the next place, ascertain the class to which he properly belongs. We are further to examine what appearances his falsehood puts on, when it proceeds from different causes, and is combined with

other principles, such as vanity, or cowardice, or hypocrisy, or malice. Having thus discovered the evil in its source, marked its progress, and seen by what subsidiary causes it is augmented; we are, lastly, to endeavour, from a careful attention to the whole circumstances under our review, to give directions how to abate the violence of the symptoms, how to eradicate the disease, and restore health and vigour to the soul.

The same rules are to be observed in the treatment of our other spiritual disorders. The practical moralist and divine must enter into the detail of character. The general divisions of a discourse, regard being paid to perspicuity, can scarce be too few and simple. The description of character, if prolixity be avoided, can scarce be too particular and minute.

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The painter, who combines in a portrait features not to be found in one, but collected from different faces, makes up a picture which has no resemblance in nature. The likeness will apply to no individual. The piece is a creature of his own imagination, and is not a copy of any of the works of God. The sculptor who would wish to unite in one statue, the beauties and proportions of the robust, the agile, and the graceful, would either attempt an impossibility, or fabricate a deformity.

The same is true of pictures or representations of mind. Nature, in this sublimer display of her powers, must be copied. Characters must be delineated and exhibited as they exist, otherwise the portraiture of them will have no originals in being.

The

The best naturalists are those who have been most correct in their arrangements, and most distinct in classing like things with like, and in separating those which are dissimilar from one another. Is there not reason to think, that human nature is capable of being considered in this scientific light? Sermons aim not at so high a refinement. This is not their province. But, if in the course of elucidating that part of our constitution which falls under their review, if in the delineation of our duty, and in detecting the secrets of wickedness, some regard is had to rules observed in treating subjects of a physical kind, the attempt, it is hoped, will not be altogether fruitless.

However this may be, the fact is, that the best practical writers on morals, sacred and profane, are those who have most attended to the distinctions of character.

Not

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Not to mention many excellent treatises composed by those of the latter denomination, the Book of Job, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, in the Bible; and the Wisdom of Solomon, and the Book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, contain most important observations, not only on the advantages of holiness, and the misery of wickedness in general, but on the respective consequences of the virtues and vices particularly specified. In the Gospels, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, he who *knew what was in man*, has left a treasure of information founded in character so rich and invaluable, as is sufficient in itself to fulfil the magnificent prophecy concerning him, *Men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.*

I have

I have only further to add, that these Sermons, such as they are, were at first delivered, with much anxiety, before that learned and venerable bench of Professors, under whom I had the honour of being educated, and before the rest of the University. With still greater diffidence they are now submitted to the perusal of the Public. With what sentiments they shall be read, and what sentence shall be passed upon them, I presume not to say; and I close the Preface with the reflection, that, *Happy are they who are humble in their expectations, for they shall not be disappointed.*

Coldstream Manse,
Dec. 26, 1789.

P O S T S C R I P T.

. BEING called officially to preside at the opening of the Provincial Synod of Merse and Tiviotdale, which met at Kelfo on the 27th of April last, the Sermon which I delivered on that occasion was honoured with their unanimous approbation and thanks: and it being understood by them that I had a volume of Sermons ready for the press, they *desired* that this Sermon should be published along with them.

Coldstream Manse,
Aug. 31, 1790.

POSTSCRIPT

—Barnes called attention to the
opening of the National Academy of Sciences
and the fact that the Academy had
been organized for the purpose of
the advancement of science and
the promotion of research and
the dissemination of knowledge
and the fact that the Academy
should be established along with research.

Continued.

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THE
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

Of the Temptations to which those born
in Poverty are exposed.

PROV. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

*TWO things have I required of thee, deny
me them not before I die. Remove far
from me vanity and lies; give me neither
poverty nor riches; feed me with food
convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny
thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest
I be poor, and steal, and take the name
of my God in vain.*

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- Page 28 line 4. *for on read in*
 34— 6. *for where read whose*
 45— penult. *for properly read plainly*
 53— 17. *for deaths read death*
 79— 8. *after birthright dele comma*
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 309— 21. *dele semicolon after eternal*
 321— 4. *for left ; read left,*
 322— *Insert the note at the bottom in the text, where the asterisk is placed.*
 348— penult. *for business read baseness*
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• E R A T A •

Page 1. Line 1. "The first" should be "The first"
Page 2. Line 1. "The second" should be "The second"
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S E R M O N I.

Of the Temptations to which those born in Poverty are exposed.

PROV. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

GOOD and bad characters are to be found in all ranks and conditions of life. The poor are not all dishonest, the rich are not all forgetful of God; and they who are independent in their circumstances, without the incumbrance of

S E R M.
I.

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great

SERM.

I.

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great wealth, are not all the friends of integrity and religion. It is evident, however, on the slightest inspection, that, according to our station in society, the exertions required of us, and the trials we are to undergo, vary entirely both in kind and degree. So great is this variety, that no two individuals were ever placed in situations so precisely alike, that there was not a manifest inequality betwixt them, in their times and chances, in the difficulties they were to encounter, and in their opportunities of moral improvement.

Yet, of the general classes into which mankind have been distributed, from the accidents of their birth, fortune, occupation, and the like, there are temptations peculiar to each, that extend to all the members of which they are respectively composed. Thus, to borrow an illustration from the text, the poor feel inducements to be false and fraudulent, and the rich to be vain and irreligious, which have not the same seductive force on those possessed of a competency in the middle station of life.

those born in Poverty are exposed.

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On the observation of these facts the prayer of Agur*, the son of Jakeh, is founded. — It is of no consequence whether, in allusion to the Hebrew interpretation of the names, we ascribe it to Solomon, *the man who collected, the son who diffused* the maxims of wisdom; or whether to some one of the prophets who flourished before the reign

SERM.

I.

* It has been disputed by the learned, who this Agur was. Agur is derived from a word in the Hebrew language which signifies to *collect*, or *gather together*. Jakeh has an opposite meaning, and signifies to *disperse*. This has induced some critics to conjecture, that by Agur we are to understand the royal author of the book of Proverbs. The beginning of the first verse of this chapter is rendered, accordingly, in the Latin version, *Verba congregantis, filii womentis*, the words of him who collected, of the son who uttered or spread abroad. Ithiel and Ucal have likewise a signification founded in the Hebrew etymology of the words; the former of them meaning *God with me*, and the latter to *prevail*, or to be *powerful*.

All this is mere hypothesis. It is much more reasonable to suppose that the first verse is historical; that Agur was a man renowned for wisdom, and perhaps one of the prophets; that Ithiel and Ucal were two of his friends or scholars, who had put certain questions to him concerning the nature and providence of God; and that the rest of the chapter contains his answer.

The notion that occult and mystic meanings abound in Holy Scripture, has been a fertile source of errors, and wild conceits, most injurious to religion, and as such ought to be avoided.

SERM.

I.

of that illustrious prince. The moral lessons to be learned from it are the same, whichever of the suppositions be embraced.

The prayer is offered up in language expressive of high devotional sentiment. *Two things, O my God, have I required of thee; not the cold wish, but the ardent desire of a heart anxious to be removed at a distance from temptation. Deny me them not before I die; when my course of discipline being finished, and my doom irrevocably sealed, it will be of no avail to beseech thee to place me in a situation the least dangerous to my virtue. Give me neither poverty nor riches, lest I be dishonest or vain. Feed me with food convenient for me: bestow upon me that portion of the good things of this life, which will teach me a humble and absolute dependence on thy providential care, and which, at the same time, will raise me above the sordid temptations to steal, and to take thy holy name in vain.*

In order to explain the grounds, and demonstrate the wisdom of the prayer of Agur, it is proposed, in the following discourse, to consider

those born in Poverty are exposed.

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consider the particular temptations to which we are exposed, SERM.
I.

1. By Poverty;

2. By Riches;

pointing out as we proceed, that the station equally removed from these extremes, is the most favourable to our moral and religious improvement, is assailed with fewer and less severe trials, and therefore ought to be the wish and most earnest prayer of every good and intelligent mind.

I. I am to explain the particular temptations to which Poverty exposes us,

Now a person may be placed in a state of poverty, or reduced to it, in these three ways: first, by the condition of his birth; secondly, by misfortunes; thirdly, by his own folly and wickedness. Of these, together with the several temptations arising from them, I shall discourse in their order.

1. Of the temptations to which we are exposed by the condition of our birth.

Co-eval then with their existence, the distresses of this too numerous and neglected class of mankind, are to date their com-

B 3

mencement.

S E R M.

I. I

mencement. Like a tree planted in a *dry* ground under inhospitable skies, their infant minds are chilled by the inclement power of necessity. They do not grow to their natural size, nor expand in their just and comely proportions. Their branches do not spread with that luxuriance, nor their blossoms unfold with that fragrance, which distinguish those reared in the fertile soil, and under the full sunshine of plenty. Their root does not stretch out by the waters, the dew does not lay all night upon their leaves, and their glory is not fresh in them.

As they advance in life, the cause that first injured, continues to operate, with fatal influence, upon their growth and progress. Their parents, surrounded with straits and difficulties, and struggling to supply the wants of nature, have neither time nor ability to pay proper attention to their opening minds. They do not cherish in them those principles of truth and integrity, which form the basis of a righteous character. Instead of this, they too often act a contrary part. They extinguish their native ingenuity,

mencement

B 3

nity, instil cunning into them, and even teach them to steal, and to lie. This hereditary evil is much increased by the bad examples that abound in the lower walks of society. Associating with companions of their own unprincipled condition, they hear evil discourse, witness mean actions, and are gradually trained up to take an active part in those plans of fraud and atrocity, which disturb the peace of mankind.

The feeling, besides, of their dependence, the pains of cold, hunger, and fatigue, and the dread of being reduced to still greater want, inspire them with a desperateness of resolution, which, rendering them fearless of consequences, makes them try the most daring expedients to change their condition to the better. They are the easier tempted to this, because they are sensible they have no character to maintain, or to lose, that is of any consequence; and partly because they hope to escape observation by the obscurity of their rank. The world is not their friend, and they are ready to take up arms against it. They care not for its approbation, they despise its

reprobation

B 4.

cenfures,

SERM.

I



censures, and become lost to all sense of honour and fear of shame. Strangers to that train of sentiment felt by those in easy circumstances, or whose time is employed in reaping the plenteous fruits of industry, they contract a habitual meanness of soul. Poverty casts a damp over all their warm and generous feelings, and appearing constantly before them, forms at last their character on the model of her own ugly and deformed image.

But chiefly against the man of affluence; are the poor of that belais I am describing tempted to bend the secret bow, and spread the subtle snare. They remark his ease and independence, together with the number and variety of pleasures within his reach. They see him squandering away on show and superfluities, often on folly and wickedness, what would render them and their families comfortable for life. This fills them with discontentment, with bitter repining at their own lot, and envy at his prosperity. To take a little of what he can so well spare, does not deserve the name of theft. It is rather

rather excusable than blame-worthy; or if there be sin in it, let the pride and insolence with which he treats the poor, atone for it. Thus, it is not the guilt, but the danger, of villainy, that lays them under any restraint. The prison, the scourge, the gibbet, and not the love of an honest reputation, or the fear of offending God, are the guardians of his property. They accordingly seize upon the first safe opportunity of stealing which occurs, and should they escape with impunity, rejoice in what they have done.

SERM.

I.

The descent to vice is easy and progressive. He who is dishonest to the rich, will soon become dishonest to others; till by repetition, the sin grows into habit, and forms the character. To deceive, over-reach, and weave the web of deceit, is henceforth the chief object of his thoughts and employment of his life.

Nor is this all: another evil is the necessary consequence of this guilty behaviour. To ripen and to conceal his designs, he is obliged to make a sacrifice of truth. A thief, therefore,

SERM.

I.



therefore, is always a liar; and when he meets with a great bribe, or is afraid that justice is to overtake him, he will perjure himself; that is, in the language of the text, *he will take the name of his God in vain.*

Accidental circumstances in the cause which hath placed a man in this condition of poverty, will augment the force of these temptations.

If, for example, he knows that, owing to avarice and oppression, evils, against which no laws have ever yet made full provision, his parents have been reduced to indigence, he will try to retaliate upon those who have been the ruin of his family. Every advantage he can take, and every mischief he can do them, seem justifiable acts of revenge. But he does not stop here. He ascribes the oppressive character to all in the same rank of life with them, and behaves accordingly.

Hence it is that an avaricious proprietor renders those who depend upon him perfidious; that a hard master makes his servants

vants thieves; that a rigorous overseer roots almost every moral principle out of his miserable slaves; and, taken in a collective body, that the most worthless of mankind are the subjects of despotic states. Tyranny produces the most lamentable effects, not only on our happiness, but on our virtue; whereas liberty is the parent of all which is great and good, generous and noble, in the character of individuals, and of nations.

But, besides the temptations already taken notice of, poverty has in store others of a more severe, I had almost said of an irresistible nature. In explanation of which, let us take the instance of a poor man, born of religious parents, who from his youth upwards has maintained an honest name. Let us further suppose him the father of a family of small children, unable to do any thing for themselves.

Behold, this poor man strains every nerve, and puts forth all his might, to supply their wants. He rises early, works hard all the day long, and stops his craving hunger with

SERM. with a morsel of coarse bread, washed down
 I. with water from the brook.

But all he does and suffers is not of sufficient avail. The times, too, we shall suppose are hard and pinching. *The labour of the year has failed, the fields yield no meat, the flocks are cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls* *. The winter rages in its violence. His cottage is ill supplied with fuel, and ill protected from the wind and rains that beat upon it. He has sought relief from the cold hand of charity, and has sought in vain.

Around the embers of a decaying fire, his children, shivering and hungry, cry to him for bread. The partner of his sorrows looks to him with eyes of despair. He can make them no answer. Tears, sighs, and the signs of conjugal sympathy and parental grief, choke all utterance.

What shall he now do? or where shall he solicit aid? He rises in awful silence, and without disclosing his design, muffled

* Habak. iii. 17.

those born in Poverty are exposed.

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up in darkness, as the last despairing effort, SERM.
I.
he goes forth, determined to *steal*.

Ye friends of integrity, what would you have done?

Although the unfeeling world may condemn, and stern justice may lift up her sword against him; yet be it yours to shed a tear upon the husband and the parent, whose starving family drove to so sad an expedient. As he returns all pale and trembling, and hastens to divide the guilty meal amongst them, without daring to beseech the blessing of God upon it, be you his advocates, and supplicate his pardon. Pray your Father which is in heaven, *to give you from day to day your daily bread, and to lead you not into temptation.* Beseech him in the words of Agur, *to feed you with food convenient for you,* lest, being reduced to such calamitous poverty, you yourselves should be tempted to *steal*, and pushed to the desperate extremity, should even *take the name of God in vain.*

The sins, then, to which the poor we have been considering are exposed in particular,
are

SERM. are those specified in the text, theft, lying,
 I. and perjury.

Lying and perjury we shall endeavour to explain in the sequel of these discourses, and at present shall make a few observations on the sin of theft.

If we appeal to our sentiments of right and wrong, nothing is more evident than that a man should not be disturbed in the enjoyment of his property. This is his own, he views it as such, and trusts that he may use and dispose of it according to his pleasure. To deprive him of it, is doing violence to his just and natural feelings, and disappointing him in plans laid, in reasonable expectation of success, for the benefit of himself and his family. The christian precept, of doing to others as we would reasonably expect to be used by them, is thus, first of all, disobeyed. In the next place, those primary rights and privileges are invaded, and those bulwarks are broken down, to establish and consecrate which, legislators have toiled and patriots bled.

On

those born in Poverty are exposed.

15

SERM.
I.

On the secure enjoyment of property, the foundation of what is dear and comfortable in the society of our fellow-creatures ultimately depends. It is this which renders our possessions our own, the fruits of our industry sure to us, and our homes a sanctuary. Theft, which is the fraudulent taking away of what belongs to our neighbour, is therefore not only subversive of the happiness, but of the very existence of all regular government.

The laws of man, and the commandments of God, have concurred to suppress a crime of so vast a magnitude. According to the degree of its atrocity, it is punishable with imprisonment, hard labour, stripes, exile, and death. *Thou shalt not steal**, holds a place in the divine summary of our duty delivered to Moses on the Mount, the breach of which, although it should pass unobserved here, will not escape the notice and avenging arm of the Almighty, when his wrath shall be revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

* Exod. xx. 15.

SERM.

I.

Poverty may extenuate, but can never excuse, the guilt of theft. A poor man, as he values his salvation, ought therefore to fortify his mind in the love of justice and in the most holy reverence for the rights and property of his neighbour. No dishonest wish should be allowed by him a place in his heart, no not for a moment; for if he shall once give it admission, and plan designs upon it, to render his condition better, he is undone. He is a thief in the eye of God, from the moment he purposed to steal. The guilty principle has struck root, which time, opportunity, and his own mischievous contrivance, will ripen into execution. As the apostle James reasons; *He will be tempted, when he is drawn away of his own covetous lust, and will be enticed: Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*.*

Having thus, in the first place, strengthened the citadel of the heart, where it is most defenceless, and most exposed to danger; he

* Jam. i. 14. 15.

must, next, exert himself to the utmost, in order to provide for himself and his family, by every expedient which lawful industry can put within his reach. Negligence, sloth, and idleness, he must entirely abjure; there being no medium between these and beggary, the last and meanest shift to which indigence can be driven. He must resolve entirely to forego ease. His life must be a life of fatigue and drudgery, to which he must inure his body, and bend his spirit.

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I.

Here, as in other cases, he will experience the wonderful power of habit. He will become insensibly reconciled unto the hardships of his condition. Industry will generally yield him a certain, although a scanty income. Sleep will refresh his wearied limbs. Hunger will give a keenness to his appetite, and a seasoning to his humble fare, which all the arts of luxury cannot impart to the most sumptuous dishes with which the table of the epicure is spread. If, after all, he should fail of success, he has the satisfaction to think that he has done his duty, and has deserved of Heaven that blessing

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upon

SERM. upon his fore labours, he cannot com-
 I. mand.

Let him not, however, even then despond. There is still in store, independent of charitable funds, that relief which the generous in opulent circumstances have to bestow. When his difficulties, and the virtuous efforts he hath ineffectually made to extricate himself from them, are known, they are disposed to befriend him. Like the dew of the morning to the parched fields, like the moon arising on a benighted traveller, like the haven receiving from a storm the tossed and shattered vessel, they will impart to him comfort, light, and assistance. Hence it has happened, that not only the poor of this description, but far higher children of misfortunes, have been delivered from them, by means so very extraordinary, and by instruments so little to have been thought interested in their cause, that the help seemed to come as an immediate bequest from the Father of mercies and consolation.

To such interpositions of providential goodness, David probably alludes, in these words:

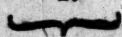
words: *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread*.*

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Instances, however, of such generosity being rare, I observe in the last place, That in a patient resignation to the will of God, the poor man will find the only sure and infallible remedy for the evils that encompass him. Except there be something very particular in his case, he can repose little confidence in the sympathy of the rich. His sufferings are either unknown to them, or neglected. Few and slender are the resources he can derive from his own mind, for knowledge did not unfold to him her page, enriched with the spoils of time and experience. But that which indigence withheld, and science

* Pf. xxxvii. 23—25.

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I.



refused, religion presents with a bountiful hand unto him. In proof of the divinity of his mission, it was proclaimed by him, whose *feet were beautiful upon the mountains, bringing good tidings of salvation**, that the poor had the gospel preached to them†.

Why then should he despair, or say unto his God, *Why hast thou forgotten me †?* Let him pray, *O my God, the rock of my hopes, my strength, my very present help in trouble!* While I walk through the cheerless and forlorn valley of poverty, *I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod will protect, and thy staff will comfort me. My sighs are heard, and the anguish of my broken heart, although unpitied by the world, is seen by thee. Therefore will I put my trust under the shadow of thy wings, thou giver of all good. I will go unto the altar of my God, unto God my exceeding joy; yea, I will praise thee, O God my God. Why then art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope*

• Isa. lii. 7. † Mat. xi. 5. † Psalms, passim.

those born in Poverty are exposed.

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thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,
who is the health of my countenance, and my
God.

SERM.

I.

If he shall thus acquire that resignation of spirit, from which the holy Psalmist derived such comfort in his afflictions, the fordid temptations already considered will make no impression upon him. This, like *the shield of faith*, will form so powerful a defence around him, as will repel or *quench every fiery dart* of adversity. It will teach him, not to repine at the condition of the independent, nor to grieve at the prosperity of his neighbour; but to be contented with what God has bestowed, and to acquiesce patiently in what he has determined concerning him. Thus will he be freed from envy, murmuring, and despite; evils great in themselves, which might provoke him to defraud, steal, rob, lie, and take the name of God in vain.

Last of all upon this head, from the example of our Saviour, who is exhibited to us as the model of perfect obedience to God, let the poor learn how to bear, and

SERM. to improve their state of humiliation and
 I. sufferings.

Jesus was born in a state of poverty, and lived and died in it. In this material respect, however, his condition differed essentially from theirs, that, with him, it was a matter of free and absolute choice, and by no means of necessity. For as the spirit of God was poured upon him, *not by measure* * ; so the gifts which resulted from that emanation were left to his own disposal, without check or control. He employed them on all occasions to relieve the distresses of others, and if he had so pleased, might have made them subservient to his own ease and conveniency. But this he never did. He had no worldly possessions, and no house or home. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head* †.

Estimating his character from his fast in the wilderness, before he entered upon his ministry, to his parting agony on mount Calvary, he displayed, and that too in

* John, iii. 34.

† Mat. viii. 20.

the most trying and difficult of situations, a resignation to the will of God, so gentle, yet so steady, inflexible, and magnanimous, as to have no parallel, and cannot be sufficiently admired. Like the lamb, his own significant emblem, he was led forth to the slaughter, and, in the majesty of unrepining silence, submitted to the painful, ignominious, and accursed death of the cross.

SERM.

I.

Since poverty, then, was ennobled by the choice, and in the person of Christ, let those who are placed in that condition by the necessity of their birth, *learn of him*, who was *meek and lowly in heart**, how to behave themselves in it. Let them imitate his mild and patient virtues. If he, *the appointed heir of all things* †, *the only begotten Son of God, the glory of the Father* ‡, was worse provided than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air; why should we sinful creatures, who *are not worthy of the least of all his mercies* §, fret and complain, be impatient and discontented, if our

* Mat. xi. 29.

† Heb. i. 2.

‡ John, iii. 18.

§ Gen. xxxii. 10.

SER. M. *lines have fallen in unpleasant and desolate*
 I. *places?*

Whatever inequalities take place in this world, there must surely be somewhere a balance in the universe, that will restore all things to their just level. Moral agents will be doubtless tried by the rules of righteousness, and will be finally rewarded or punished, according as their behaviour has, or has not, been conformable to them. And, other things being equal, moral and sentient beings may expect a recompense proportioned to their sufferings. When creatures of the same blood and lineage, of the same nature and feelings, share so differently of happiness, altogether independent of their merit or demerit, this is a good reason for inferring that the God of justice and goodness has appointed a day of universal retribution.

The rich man, in the parable*, is condemned to punishment, and Lazarus is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The cause assigned for which is, that the

* Luke, xvi. 19.

former

former having received in his life-time his good things, and the latter evil things, therefore the one was comforted, and the other tormented. But allowing that they had been both translated to heaven, still of the two, Lazarus must have been the happiest. The transition from a lesser to a higher degree of happiness is not so beatific, as the transition from misery into that higher enjoyment. The more sufferings a good man endures in this state of things, the more felicity he will partake of in heaven; and therefore it is, that he who drank deepest of the cup of affliction, is now exalted to the first and highest celestial honours, being seated on the throne, at the right hand of God.

SERM.

I.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

S E R M O N II.

Of the Temptations to which those reduced to Poverty by Misfortunes are exposed.

PROV. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I die. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

SERM.
II.

ACCORDING to the general plan of discourse, I now proceed, in the second place, to consider the Temptations to which those are exposed, who have been reduced to Poverty by Misfortunes.

There

There is one thing in which this state of poverty agrees with the former, that they are both of divine appointment, and are not occasioned by folly or wickedness. In other circumstances they differ essentially, and it will appear from the following particulars, that the condition we are next to examine, is by far the more unfortunate, wrings the heart with severer anguish, and is accompanied with a sensibility to the evils arising from indigence, which those born and brought up in it never felt.

The man who has lived in poverty from his infancy, has, by long acquaintance, become familiar to its hardships. He accommodates himself to his situation, and bends to the wintry winds that have ever blown upon him. The coarse and scanty diet, the cold cottage, the tattered clothes, he is seasoned, by length of time and the knowledge of nothing more comfortable, to endure. His desires and wants are few, because he has been taught, by dear-bought experience, the folly of aspiring at enjoyments, separated from him by the impassable gulf of poverty.

SERM.

II.

The evils he at present suffers, are the same and no worse than the evils he has formerly been accustomed to. The tissue of his fate has been uniform. He has no changes on it to bewail, no lessons of forgetfulness to learn, and no comparisons to make between his present and better days.

Different, in many respects, are the trials of him who has sunk from a condition of riches into poverty. As the mind generally expands or contracts, in a certain proportion to our occupations, and to the rank we hold in society; so his taste, sentiments, and habits of thought and living, are superior to those which belong to the state into which he is fallen. He must submit to inconveniencies, troubles, and wants, to which formerly he was an entire stranger. He must give up innocent amusements, that once filled up so agreeably the blanks left by business in his time. He must deny himself to gratifications long indulged in, and confine his enjoyments within that narrow circle which stern necessity has drawn around him. Now all this is a work of mortification, and great self-command.

How

How hard it is to sustain the burden of poverty, even by those accustomed to bear it from their infancy, has been already shewn. What, then, must be its pressure, when laid upon a person who never knew what it was to stoop to want? The reverse in his affairs is grievous and melancholy, without any consolations flowing from it to support him.

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II.

Adversity often pours into the wounds she inflicts, a balm that mitigates their pain, and strengthens us to behave with spirit. The patriot who, in defence of his country and its injured rights, meets with the ingratitude of an unthankful people, descends into the vale of retirement, supported by his integrity, the magnanimity of his sentiments, and the consciousness that he deserves the honour which envy and faction have withheld from him. The hero, who returns from the wars with a broken constitution, and with wounds never to be healed, is comforted by the glory he has acquired, and by the kind sympathy of his friends and countrymen. Even in a distempered state, when
the

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II.

the rage of party brings the wise and good to the scaffold, or when persecution consigns them to the flames, the idea of falling in a great cause, lifts them above the fear of human scorn and indignity, and the terrors of death.

But the retired and inglorious sufferings of poverty, are not attended with any comforts of this softening nature, save perhaps the decaying sympathy of a few friends. They neither excite the commiseration of the public, nor call forth sentiments in us capable to support us under the change of condition here supposed. They alter the face of nature, convert rich fields into a wilderness, and the city into a solitude. They raise up in hideous forms, demons of temptation difficult to be resisted or expelled, possessing those of different tempers and ways of thinking in different manners.

To describe the variety of evils to which our species are liable from this source, were an endless task. We shall restrict our observations to such of them as are
common

common to whole classes of character, that may be defined. We shall first endeavour to ascertain their appearances, and shall next, as we proceed, point out the remedies to prevent, or to cure them.

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II.

1. Some, upon being reduced to poverty, sink into a state of spirits so melancholy and desponding, that they become unfit to discharge the ordinary duties of life. Harassed by wants and by cares never felt before, surrounded with increasing difficulties, they yield themselves a prey to discontentment, impatience, repining, and fearful apprehensions. Brooding constantly over the change they have met with, and ever contrasting their present with their past condition, they raise up to themselves an image of their fate, monstrous in size, and aggravated with every ugly feature, of which a disturbed fancy can conceive the idea. The remembrance of former joys, which in some situations presents such pleasing visions, serves only to render it more grim and terrible.

From

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II.

From hearts bursting with grief, and in language interrupted with sighs, they breathe the wish, and utter the complaints of Job: *Oh that we were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved us; when his candle shined upon our heads, and when by his light we walked through darkness; as we were in the days of our youth, and the Almighty was yet with us! But now have our calamities come upon us, as a wide breaking in of waters; in the desolation they rolled themselves upon us. Terrors are turned upon us, and they pursue our soul as the wind; and our welfare passeth away as a cloud. And now our soul is poured out upon us; the days of our affliction have taken hold of us. Our harp also is turned to mourning, and our organ into the voice of them that weep*.*

But although the reverse of fortune which Job experienced was so great, that no parallels are to be found to it, in its varied extent and severity of woe; yet those who have undergone the change under our consideration, are ready to fall

* Job, ch. xxix. and xxx. passim.

into that train of sentiments and reasoning, SERM.
II. which forms the most important, and by far the most tender and pathetic part of the book which passes under his name.

This breaks their spirits, engenders gloomy cares and forebodings, and puts hope far from them. At a time when they have most occasion for a collected mind, for vigour of thought, and manly exertion, they droop and lose all courage. The face where health was wont to reside, and cheerfulness to smile, becomes the wrinkled abode of despondency. *The sun, in a literal sense, the light, the moon, the stars are darkened; the voice of the bird is not heard, and all the daughters of music are brought low**. Nature wears a sickly aspect; and the days have arrived before their time, when they say, in the bitterness of their heart, *they have no pleasure in them.*

Having thus contracted a distaste, and with that, an incapacity for exertion and industry, the only expedient in their power to retrieve, with the blessing of God, their

* Eccles. xii.

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II.

affairs; they lose at the same time, all relish for the pleasures of society, and the endearments of affection. Solitude is their delight. They love to sit alone in the forsaken chamber, or to wander in the woods, where gloom and silence accord with the tenor of their melancholy thoughts. Like those who indulge the thirst occasioned by the dropsy, they give nourishment to the disease which is preying upon their vitals. On a broken heart a crowd of bodily distempers attends, which, gradually impairing their constitution, lays their head on an untimely bier, or, if they have much sensibility, reduces them to a condition worse than death.

Let those, in the situation here described, fortify themselves against the attack of this hopeless state of mind. Let them cultivate patience and fortitude. Let them avoid retirement, and banish, as far as they can, from their reflections, the memory of happier times. This is a hard lesson; but alas! to dangerous diseases, severe remedies must be applied.

I

Next

Next to the consolations of religion, nothing is more efficacious in putting to flight the cares and anxieties, which hover around them, than activity in some lawful employment. Let them speedily make choice of what is most suitable to their taste and capacity. Instead of indulging, let them rouse themselves from their lethargy, and display a spirit, for which the exigence of their affairs so loudly calls. Their honour, as well as their interest, demands this of them. Where is the merit in steering a vessel, when the winds are fair, and the skies serene? But when the storm descends, the billows rage, and the night grows terrible with darkness, then is there need for the exertion of all the skill and ingenuity, all the courage and constancy of the pilot. Did he then despair, and abandon the helm, what must be the consequence, but certain shipwreck?

If yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, bring poverty upon us as one that travelleth, an

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II.

want as an armed man *; how much more must despair, added to indolence, incapacitate us from emerging out of such distress? Courage then! While there is life, there is hope. What vast difficulties has not determined and persevering resolution surmounted? If it be unfortunate with us at present, it was not so formerly, and may not be so hereafter. The gale which is now adverse, may shift its course, and blow propitious again. Providence is large, and the hand which humbled can exalt, and *turn the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs* †.

2. Others adopt a contrary plan. They form the desperate resolution of banishing all serious thought and consideration from them. They despise business, as the drudgery of servile minds. They seek the company of the giddy and dissipated, and plunge into excesses of riot and intemperance. Lured by the gold which glitters on the table of the gamester, they some-

* Prov. vi. 10, 11. † Ps. cvil. 35.

times repair to it, in hopes of repairing at once their shattered affairs. But, there, superior skill and cunning soon plunder them of any wretched reversion that remains to them, and drive them to intoxication, the last mournful expedient to drown in oblivion their troubled thoughts.

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II.

But in vain do they endeavour to fly from themselves. In vain, like the wounded hart, do they try to dislodge the arrow that sticks fast in their side. Gloomy reflection accompanies their flight, and pursues them wherever they go.

In the season of adversity, when there is so pressing a demand for thought and consideration, nothing can be so decisively ruinous, as the attempt to bury in the stupefaction of drunkenness and folly their sense of their misfortunes, and the hope of extricating themselves from the misery in which they are involved. This at best can afford only a temporary relief. The flow of spirits raised by artificial means, has more than a proportional ebb. It is hardly possible to find a comparison sufficiently

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II.

ficiently expressive of this madness. It is acting the part of a traveller, if such a traveller can be supposed to exist, who, finding himself bewildered among precipices, instead of endeavouring to escape danger, should close his eyes, and walk onwards regardless of all consequences.

3. Others of a lofty spirit smother the big emotions that labour in their breast. They scorn consolation, and set at nought the sympathy of friends and relations. No complaint is heard to proceed from their lips, and even no sigh from their bosom. Unrevealed are their sorrows, and their *heart knoweth its own bitterness* *. But this effort of magnanimity, that might sustain a man on a great and conspicuous catastrophe, is altogether disproportioned to the humiliating reverse which has befallen them. It is taking a flight too arduous for mortals. As ancient fable relates, it is soaring too high the sun on wings fastened with wax, which melting, they

* Prov. xiv. 10.

tumble

tumble headlong into the abyfs, over which they were attempting to crofs.

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II.

Friendship is the virtue of souls exalted, like theirs, above the ordinary standard of humanity. Adapted to the condition and exigencies of our being, it is the source of the most refined pleasures we enjoy in prosperity; and, what is of much greater consequence, it is the medicine which, next to religion, can administer relief, if not a cure, to the forest wounds of adversity. Let them not despise, but cherish it, in their fall. To unbosom themselves without reserve to the friend who *loves them as his own soul**, so far from derogating from their dignity, is acting the part of the wise and good. This will give vent to a grief that burns in secret, which pains the more, the more it is repressed, and which, without this kindly remedy, must soon waste and consume them.

The son of Sirach, after having given directions how to make choice of a friend,

* 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

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H.

thus describes his importance. *A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he that hath found such a one, hath found a treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellence is unvaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life, and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright; for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also* *. The figures under which friendship is here typified, *a strong defence, a discovered treasure, an unvaluable excellence, the medicine of life*, demonstrate that this celebrated imitator of Solomon's writings was recommending a virtue which he esteemed as a sovereign relief to the troubles, to which *man that is born of a woman* † is at all times exposed.

Man is indeed too feeble a creature to stand alone in the season of adversity, when *the winds blow, and the rains descend and beat upon him* ‡. Let him decline the unequal struggle. Let him accept the

* Eccclus, vi. 14—17. † Job, xiv, 1. ‡ Mat. vii. 27.

shelter

shelter which friendship and affection present to him. Many have died of a broken heart by refusing proper and well-timed assistance, and by attempting things too high to be achieved. *The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear *?*

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4. This leads me to consider another class of the unfortunate, who not having been directed in the choice of their friends, by the fear of the Lord, as the son of Sirach admonisheth, discover when it is too late their mistake, and draw from it the presumptuous inference, that the whole of mankind are selfish and perfidious.

Friendship is a jewel of great intrinsic worth, and, like other precious jewels, is rare to be found. Eager to be possessed of it, and yet unable to distinguish the real from the counterfeit, a man in prosperity is extremely liable to be deceived in the choice of his friends. He naturally associates with companions of his own rank and opulence; he shares in their pleasures;

* Prov. xviii. 14,

he

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he visits and is visited by them. Their effusions of kindness, when joy presides at the banquet, and when *the wine giveth his colour in the cup, and moveth itself aright* *, he takes to be friendship. And the train of courtesies and attention he receives from his inferiors, and from all who are, or who hope to be, benefited by him, he reckons personal esteem.

But, behold! the scene changes, and the wheel of life, the sport of times and chance, turns round, and lays him and his power prostrate in the dust. Perceiving that the road to preferment is not now the same, his mercenary expectants forsake him, and betake themselves to others, who are in flourishing circumstances. He no longer meets with the obsequious bow, the circumspect approach, and salutations of honour from them. Even those who formerly could not find access into his company, assume airs of importance, nay of superiority over him. The unfeeling world does not sympathise with him, and often, with a malicious pleasure, insults his distress. Of this

* Prov. xxiii. 31.

that

those reduced to Poverty are exposed.

43

that son of misfortunes, even Job, bitterly complained: *But now they that are younger than I, have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock* *.

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II.

This ungenerous usage gives him much pain. Upon reflecting, however, on the character and selfish views of those who behave in this manner to him, he comforts himself, that nothing better was to be expected from hirelings, sycophants, and vulgar minds. Why then should he be cast down? He has in reserve the dear companions of his better days, in whose pity and commiseration he may now hope for relief in his adversity.

But now the fatal secret comes to light, that he has no friends, nor ever had any. Instead of the hearty welcome he used to receive from those he reckoned in that number, he is coldly saluted as a distant acquaintance. He no longer maintains the place he held in their society; his importance in it gradually declines, till at

* Job, xxx. 1.

last,

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II.

last, like the stricken deer, he is excluded from it. Too late he discovers to be true, what the son of Sirach taught; *That some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of trouble; and that, some friend is a companion at the table, and will not continue in the day of his affliction, who in the day of his prosperity was as himself; but who, when he was brought low, was against him, and hid himself from his face* *. Or he may lament with Job; *Mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me: my kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me: all my inward friends abhorred me; and they whom I loved are turned against me* †.

A return so unexpected tears every nerve in pieces, and puts all his sensibilities to the torture. Grief bordering on despair at first overwhelms him; emerging from which, a sullen melancholy, that converts his friendship into bitter hatred, darkens his countenance, and settles in his temper. He next begins to doubt,

* Eccles. vi. 8, 10, 11, 12.

† Job, xix. 13, 14, 19.

whether

whether there be existing in the human breast, generosity, pity, compassion, or any sentiment of a disinterested nature. The language of civility, and still more of kindness, he conceives to be employed, in order to conceal under it some treacherous design. In all his dealings, he proceeds with that guarded caution, as if the whole of his kind were knaves and villains.

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II.

Ruminating incessantly on these gloomy topics, he at last concludes, that man is altogether a selfish creature, void of all generous joys and generous cares beyond himself. Such an opinion hardens his heart, and shuts up every avenue by which happiness can find access into it. Whilst fermenting along with it, envy at the happy, despite at the fortunate, rage at his false friends, thirst of retaliation, and the dread of future misery, drive him out of society, and he wanders forth a confirmed and inveterate misanthrope; or, to speak more properly, a hater of his species.

Now,

SERM.

II.



Now, did we listen to the voice of God, speaking to us in our original feelings, and in Holy Scripture, the very idea of falling into this state of mind would fill us with horror. We would perceive, that the desire of seeing and rendering others miserable is misery: and that all which is delightful in our commerce with the world, arises from loving and being beloved. A plan of life founded upon enmity at our species, is sufficient in itself to render the man who acts upon it completely unhappy. It must likewise make him wicked. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, is the second, like to the first and great, commandment of the law. The same was appointed by our Saviour to be the test, by which his disciples were to be distinguished from the rest of mankind. *A new commandment*, says he, *I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* *. From this love,

* John, xiii. 34, 35.

which

which may be called the principle of benevolence, flow all the duties comprised under the second table of the law. If hatred instead of love be the spring of our action, the fountain being poisoned in its source, the streams that issue from it must partake of its deleterious quality.

Nor is this all. So unnatural an enmity at our species incapacitates us from loving God. For the principle of piety is congenial with the principle of benevolence, grows up with and derives energy from it, but declines and dies, if the other be rooted out. This is taken notice of by the apostle John in these words: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also* *.

The ingratitude of false friends, is no sufficient authority for the supposition, that we are all selfish creatures, void of pity

* 1 John, iv. 20, 21.

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II.

and benevolence. This is all we can justly infer from it, That we have erred in our choice, and have mistaken a certain convivial turn of mind, and the exchange of courteous actions, for friendship. But because our summer companions have fled away with a retiring sun, it were ungenerous to think, that friendship itself, like the phoenix of Arabia with all its fine and golden plumage, existed only in the dreams of philosophy, and in the fables of the East.

No: There is friendship in the world. All are not mercenary and perfidious. Let not the guilt of a few, or even of the many, be imputed to the whole; nor our nature be estimated by a standard so far beneath its value.

Should our misfortunes have been occasioned by villainy or oppression, neither is this a reason for supposing that all men are destitute of justice and integrity. Violence, it is true, has been as old as Cain, and fraud of nearly the same antiquity. But innocence can boast of an higher ancestry,
and

and uprightness and holy regards to the happiness of others, have prevailed from the beginning of time, and will prevail to its end. In the dislike borne to individuals that may have injured us, let us not involve the whole of our kind. Let us remember that God made *man in his own image**, and that although we have sought out many inventions, we still retain distinct and undeniable vestiges of our celestial origin.

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Lastly, As to those who pretended love to us for their own selfish ends, and who therefore abandoned us in our distress, their desertion is surely more to be rejoiced in, than regretted. They are a most unhappy, but an unavoidable attendant on opulence. They *gather together, like the eagles, wheresoever the carcase is*†, to prey upon and devour it. Should the days of our former years return, they too will return with flattery in their lips, with fresh professions of friendship to us, and proffers of their service.

* Gen. i. 27.

† Matth. xxiv. 28.

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II.

5. Of those who have been deceived, betrayed, and ruined by their relations, or those in whose affection they placed confidence.

Among the forms of misery that are seen passing through this region of the valley of poverty, I perceive one disfigured with wounds he received in the house of his fathers. Of simplicity of character, unsuspicious of harm, free of guile, and as ignorant of the crooked ways of the world, as the infant on the breast of its mother, he relied, with unbounded confidence, on friends and relations, who brought him to ruin. He was not forsaken, but betrayed; he was not deserted, but plundered. Affection gave the kiss, and love the stab that laid him low.

So dreadful a return to his goodness awakes him, like one astonished with a fearful dream. Where he expected a life of peace and happiness, and was blessed in the flattering idea, he has experienced the bitterest misery. The vineyard he
had

those reduced to Poverty are exposed.

51

had fenced with such care, and planted SERM.
II.
*with the choicest vines, instead of producing its proper fruit, brings forth wild grapes, and is only fit for briers and thorns to come up in it **. His home has become *a court for owls to break his rest, and an habitation of dragons to devour †*.

Appalled with such prodigies of wickedness, he wishes to fly from them into wild solitudes, where the foot of man never trod, to beseech that redress from heaven, which he cannot here obtain. In the complaints of David, who, as appears from his writings, was no stranger to the mournful situation here described; *his heart is sore pained within him; and the terrors of death are fallen upon him. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon him. In the anguish of his soul he sigheth, O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo then would I wander far off; and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. But all*

* Isa. v. 1—6.

† Isa. xxxiv. 13.

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in vain; for memory, cruel to his feelings, attends him in his fancied exile: *It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me, that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, mine acquaintance, my friend and brother. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company* *. These dear and affecting sentiments, contrasted with so treacherous a behaviour, excite a conflict within him, which nature scarce can bear; till at last, rage and dire imprecations give it a temporary relief. *Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell, for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them* †.

It is a fearful truth, and the heart sickens to think upon it, that this situation of distress is not ideal. There are instances, though, for the honour of our nature, we would hope they are rare to be found, where the character last de-

* Ps. lv. passim.

† Ps. lv. 15.

lineated is most liable to mischief, from those not only allied to him by the holy ties of relationship and consanguinity, but who have been benefited by him in the kindest manner. Strangers, nay aliens, will pity, and be disposed to relieve him, whilst this brood of Iscariot first betrayed, and then shut up their bowels of compassion against him.

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The dagger of a friend gives a wound, that the weapon of an enemy cannot possibly inflict. It strikes under the fifth rib. The bite of an enraged serpent is not more mortal. Friendship abused, favours ill-requited, and the evils we receive in the house, and from the hands of those we love, are the death of deaths.

Should it be our melancholy lot to meet with such treatment, let us look up to the cross of Christ, and learn from him, how to regulate our spirit. We cannot be exposed to such wrongs and insults as he endured, or be *wounded* as he was, *in the house of his friends* *. Superior in all

* Zec. xiii. 6.

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II.

things, he held the sorrowful pre-eminence of enduring more from the ingratitude of mankind, than any person ever did. Yet in the course of a troubled life, despised and rejected by *his own, who received him not* *, he maintained the ascendancy of his meekness, his patience, and resignation, over the resentful feelings. Even in the agonies of death, to which he was sold and betrayed by false friends, he was so compassionate as to pray for those who were crucifying him; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* †.

6. Some of a contemplative mind, especially if their misfortunes have been occasioned by the neglect or the villainy of others, form gloomy opinions of the providence of God. They remark that genius and virtue are often languishing in the shade, whilst ignorance, folly, and profligacy are prosperous in the world. This leads them to call in question the wisdom of that distribution of wealth, ease, independency, and the other gifts of fortune,

* John, i. 11.

† Luke, xxiii. 34.

as they are called, which takes place here. Reasoning from their own case, they conclude that they have met with unkind, if not, what is worse to bear, with partial and unjust treatment.

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In the complaints uttered by Job, and by the author of the seventy-third Psalm, we find that the prosperity of the wicked may suggest, even to good men, ideas of the divine government that are gloomy and dispiriting. Job, in his own defence, thus addresses his vexatious and troublesome comforters: *Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. Even when I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold of my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power*?* The Psalmist, as above quoted, observes: *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued as other men. There-*

* Job, xxi. 5-7.

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fore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish.*

When these holy men were thus filled with doubts, we are not to wonder that false and impious conclusions, regarding the providence and character of God, have been drawn by minds not so regulated as theirs.

Hence some have supposed that sublunary affairs are left entirely to *chance*, and that either there is no intelligent head of the universe, or, if there be one, that he does not care for creatures like us so infinitely below his notice and regard. They question, *How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High †?*

Some again, flying into the opposite extreme, resolve all things into absolute *fate*, an hypothesis that, traced out in its legitimate consequences, terminates in atheism, like the former.

* Ps. lxxiii. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7.

† Ps. lxxiii. 11.

Others,

Others, misled by the sophistry of minute philosophers, reject the first principles of religion, reckon the sublimest wisdom *foolishness*, and become avowed infidels. SERM.
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Lastly, on this head, others form to themselves an image of God, after the similitude of their own dark and partial souls. They regard him as a being who loves and hates; who bestows and withholds light, and graces, and virtues; who rewards and punishes, not according to the rules of wisdom and goodness, but according to an arbitrary fatality of will, that binds in immutable and everlasting chains, the whole series of things, past, present, and to come. The effect of such opinions on a heart broken with misfortunes is beyond description. It produces religious despair, which takes from them all expectations of mercy and forgiveness, of peace and reconciliation with their God. Their past sufferings seem to prove, that they belong to that number, who are devoted, from all eternity, to irretrievable perdition. They have no comfort in life, and believe that death is to plunge

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II.

plunge them into the unfathomable abyfs, where peace and reft can never dwell, where hope never comes, and from whence no escape can ever poffibly be made.

Gilead has no balm, and even Nazareth no phyfician for thefe maladies; till they who are afflicted by them, fhall firft of all change their creed.

Atheifm is the forlorn hope, the laft despairing refort of a mind loft to happinefs. Whether concealed under the form of monads or elementary principles of Epicurus, whether under the veil of fate or the grofs mask of materialifm, or whether under the plaufible guiſe of a ſeries of finite cauſes, generating each other in ſucceſſion, from everlaſting to everlaſting, it can give no relief to thoſe encompassed with forrows, and troubled in ſpirit.

Deiſm ſhines like the moon, with borrowed beams, not with genuine ſelf-ſprung light. To one puffed up by the wiſdom of this world, and with the ideas of dignity, independence, and reſources falſely aſcribed to human nature, it may appear
an

an all-sufficient guide, in the day of prosperity. But when misfortunes press upon him, the case under consideration, he will find that it gives a dubious and uncertain light, retires when he has most occasion for assistance, and, leaving him at last alone and benighted, wanes away into total and everlasting darkness.

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Those, again, who conceive that the Governor of the universe is a capricious, arbitrary, malevolent, revengeful Being, can derive no consolation in their distress, from a religion founded in grace, mercy, and love. I again repeat it, they must perish in despair, except they abjure their creed, and seek for light and knowledge regarding the character of God, and the duties he requires of us, in that plenteous source of information, which he has been pleased to open to mankind in the gospel. Then, and not till then, will they learn, that he is the same wise and good, gracious and merciful Being, in our adversity as in our prosperity, in the mortal as in the natal hour. Then will they be taught,

not

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*not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor to faint when they are rebuked of him : for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth**. Then will they feel the divine influence of that piety, which alone can preserve us firm and erect, amidst all the shocks and convulsions of worldly things, and enable us to look beyond them to that *rest* which *remaineth to the people of God* †.

I conclude in the exhortation to patience founded by St. James, on the belief of the second appearance of Christ.

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and bath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh ‡.

* Heb. xii. 5, 6.

† Heb. iv. 9.

‡ Jam. v. 7, 8.

S E R M O N I I I .

Of the Temptations to which those reduced
to Poverty by Folly and Vice are exposed.

PROV. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

*Two things have I required of thee ; deny me
them not before I die. Remove far from
me vanity and lies ; give me neither poverty
nor riches ; feed me with food convenient
for me : lest I be full, and deny thee, and
say, Who is the Lord ? or lest I be poor,
and steal, and take the name of my God in
vain.*

AS there are some brought to poverty
by unavoidable misfortunes, so there
are others who reduce themselves to that
condition by imprudence and vice. In a
country so abundant in riches, and in every
article of luxury, and in an age addicted to
pleasure,

S E R M .
I I I .

S E R M.

III.

pleasure, and so prone to dissipation as ours, this is an appearance extremely frequent to be seen.

Some fall into a state of indigence, by living in a manner too expensive for their income. Some, through negligence and mismanagement, allow their affairs to go into such confusion, as at last involves them in ruin. Others of an ambitious, or of a covetous disposition, instead of resting satisfied with moderate, or even plenteous circumstances, embark in such vast projects, as put all they have to wreck. Many, by a loose and debauched course of life, waste both their substance and their constitution. Others, by villainy, and attempting to overreach their neighbours, are caught in their own snares, and come to beggary. Many throw away their goodly possessions without credit, pleasure, or the smallest enjoyment, by the infamous and pestilential practice of gaming.

That state of poverty, the temptations peculiar to which remain to be considered, differs from the two former in one material point ;

point; that whereas these come upon us in the course of providence, without any fault of our own, the other is to be entirely ascribed to human folly and depravity.

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The pain, troubles, and distress arising from misfortunes, are called *sufferings*. The miseries caused by wickedness are called *punishment*, whether they be external, injuring our estate, our person, or reputation; or whether internal, occasioning remorse. The state of the mind in these two situations is altogether different.

It is, in itself, no disgrace to descend from parents in a low condition, as there is no merit in being born to a title, or heir of a great estate. Neither is it in the least dishonourable to be reduced to want, by accidents we could neither foresee nor prevent. In both conditions, we have the comfort to reflect, that we were not the guilty cause of what hath come upon us. It was the doing of the Lord, which, with the consciousness of innocence, is surely the greatest of all supports in adversity. This banishes despair, and inspires the
pleasing

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pleasing hope, that he who humbled may again exalt, that he who cast down may uplift, and that, in the event of things, he will make *our light affliction, which is but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory**. This will enable us to say with Job: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil †? The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord ‡.*

How entirely unlike, how far more miserable is the man, who, being in affluence, and in a situation to continue in it, has lost his birth-right, and, with that, all the pleasures of independence, by a life of dissipation and profligacy. He is exposed to every kind of distress, described in the second part of this head of discourse, aggravated with the fore and excruciating reflection, that he himself only is to blame as their guilty cause. This is the principal and severest ingredient in the sentiment of remorse. As good seen in expectation, is

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† Job, ii. 10.

‡ Job, i. 21.

magnified

magnified by hope, so departed happiness is now beheld by him, like the clouds at sun-set, embellished with colours more rich, variegated, and brilliant, than he enjoyed it in the neglected and abused noon-day of his prosperity.

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When his passions are refused their accustomed gratification, when his pampered appetites solicit in vain, when he is dunned with the clamours of his creditors, and pursued by the vultures of the law, how tormenting is the thought, that the dispersion of his fortune, the forfeiture of his happiness, and all the dishonours and wretchedness he endures, have been solely occasioned by his own folly and wickedness! Where shall he seek for, and where can he find, relief? Every channel of consolation is dried up. The wisdom he set at nought, whose reproof he would have none of, now laughs at his calamity, and mocks when his fear cometh as desolation, and destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon him*.

* Prov. i. 25—27.

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He has no resources in himself, and is miserable when alone. *Terror makes him afraid on every side. His strength is hunger-bitten, and destruction is ready at his side. It devours the strength of his skin; even the first-born of death devours his strength* *. The reflection on his past life overwhelms him with shame, confusion, and the sense of guilt. His prospect into futurity is attended with feelings of doubt, horror, and despair. He is *like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt* †. Wherever he goes, he is tortured with *the worm that never dies, and with the fire that is not quenched* ‡.

When he comes out of solitude into the world, he reads in the countenance, and hears in the discourse, of the good and pious, the condemnation of his worthlessness. He enters into their sentiments. He looks at his behaviour with their eyes, and feels that he is the just and proper object of their disapprobation, and is an out-

* Job, xviii. 11—13. † Il. lvii. 20. ‡ Mark, ix. 44.

cast from their sympathy and commiseration.

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Conscience, upon this, catches a fresh alarm. The sense of guilt excites within him the fear of punishment. If man thus passes sentence against him, what has he not to dread from the awakened sword of divine justice, who hath *treasured up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?*

Exiled from the society of the virtuous, and desperate with his upbraiding reflections, he resorts to the midnight haunts of the sons of Belial. He joins with them in their reprobate discourse, in their derision of righteousness and righteous characters, in their blasphemies against Providence, and their disavowal of every principle, moral and religious, human and divine. He thus hardens himself more and more in sin, till at last, destroying all sense of honour and shame, and extinguishing the holy light of conscience, he crazes the few traces of the image of God, that were left graven in his heart.

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heart. Then, armed at all points, and disciplined for the service of Satan, he sallies forth to retrieve his affairs, by every expedient that boldness, strengthened by despair, dares attempt. He over-reaches the simple, he imposes upon friends, he cheats at game, he counterfeits and forges, he steals and robs; till either justice, arresting him in his career, puts him to an ignominious death, or till his repeated disappointments, and dishonours, and miseries, rid the world of him by his own atrocious hands.

How far this description of the consequences of dissipation is just, let our weekly annals, stained with accounts of suicide, and let the records of our criminal courts, marked every where in their progress with such numerous executions, bear melancholy witness.

By reprobates thus arrived at the last stage of human depravity, the voice of religion, it is feared, will neither be listened to in her admonitions, or her threatenings. Such we do not attempt to counsel. Christ
forbad

forbad to give *that which is holy unto the dogs, or to cast our pearls before swine* *.

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But we would warn others, who are in danger of following their example, to desist in time, lest they be partakers of their dismal fate. Let them regard their falling into poverty, as the just punishment of their sins. Let them beseech God to render this chastisement efficacious, in deterring them from being disobedient, for the future, to his holy will. Taught by experience that humiliation and want, that remorse and misery, are the bitter fruits of iniquity, let them repent of their sins and reform their manners, that they may escape *the wrath to come* †.

Before closing this branch of discourse, I would beg leave to offer a caution to the young and unexperienced, who constitute so large a part of my respectable audience, to beware of being infected with the much-prevailing contagion of gaming. Although this vice be, by no means, peculiar to this

* Mat. vii. 6.

† 1 Thess. i. 10.

S E R M.
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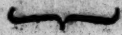
age and country, yet there is cause to think, that it never arose to that pitch of enormity, any where or at any time, as it has done at present in this land. It attacks all ranks and orders of men, and being countenanced by fashion, is more dangerous and ensnaring than sins branded with infamy.

To those, it is allowed, who have command of time, and who make it a determined rule of their conduct to risk nothing of consequence, gaming may be considered as an amusement entirely innocent. Still, however, after making this concession, I would admonish youth to be on their guard against contracting a taste, and frequenting the company of such as are professedly addicted to it. Easy are habits in it acquired. They who indulge in them, will be enticed from less to more, from smaller to greater adventures, till they be brought to ruin. The accidents of war and public bankruptcies excepted, nothing has produced, with us, such revolutions in property, and has caused the downfall of so many flourishing and opulent families, as this truly disgraceful vice.

Now,

Now, what must be the feelings of a man, who has reduced himself thus suddenly and unworthily to a state of poverty? He was yesterday in plenty, *was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously*. He has met with no misfortunes, no accidents, no *visitations* of Providence. Yet to-day he is as poor as the *beggar* formerly *laid at his gate*. His money, his houses, his lands, are all vanished as if by enchantment. He goes to sleep, and soon awakes, thinking all which is past a troubled dream, an illusion of a disturbed fancy. But there is a pang which quickly undeceives him, piercing him with sorer anguish than a thousand poisoned arrows can inflict. He starts up pale and faint, and oft in the first paroxysms of despair, and first storm of remorse, precipitates himself headlong into the abyss of eternity.

Such are the strong and numerous temptations, to which poverty, whether occasioned by the necessity of our birth, by misfortunes, or by folly and wickedness, exposes us. That a person, in moderate

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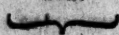
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circumstances, is not liable to them, in the same kind or strength, might be illustrated at great length. This is not necessary. A few general remarks will, it is hoped, suffice to vindicate the propriety of Agur's prayer.

Agreeable to the plan already laid down and prosecuted, let us take the instance of a person born, educated, and occupying the middle station of life, by which I would be understood to mean, a condition of independence, above the straits of indigence, and free from the incumbrance of great riches, and which must, therefore, vary according to the rank we hold in society.

The love of truth and justice being natural to us, one should conclude, that such as are brought up in plenty, would not contract in their youth a false and dishonest disposition. For, independent of the amiable simplicity of that age, it is not easy to assign any positive cause, why their first principles should be tainted with villainy. They are not pinched with hunger and cold, nor do they wear the tattered garb of poverty. All their wants are supplied, and
all

all their reasonable desires gratified. With SERM.
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their increasing stature their minds advance in improvement, and they soon perceive that they have a station to occupy, from which a sacred regard to the rights of mankind is expected.

They are educated under parents anxious to inspire them with principles of truth, honour, and integrity. Together with the rudiments of useful knowledge, they are taught, that falsehood blots the character with a stain never to be washed out. They are tinctured with a regard for religion, which, banished from the palace, and too often excluded from the cottage, takes up her peaceful abode with those who enjoy a competency, the wish and prayer of the son of Jakeh. This fortifies them in all their virtuous principles, and places the deformity and danger of wickedness in a point of view, of all others, the most interesting to beings who consider themselves as candidates for glory and immortality.

They are thus prepared to enter upon the stage of life, with a mind impressed with

with a love of justice, and an abhorrence of dishonesty. Their spirit not contracted by want, but grown up to its proper dimensions, acquires an open and gallant flow of sentiment. Actions, which would seem of small demerit, and even excusable, to one in straitened circumstances, are in their eyes vile and dishonourable. The same happy competency that cherished the seeds of virtue in their young minds, continues to ripen them, with their ripening years, and to preserve them, in the course of their lives, obedient to her sacred admonitions.

On a person thus established in moral and religious principles, and placed in the condition here supposed, dishonesty, from whose temptations Agur prays first to be kept, can make no impression. He is not pursued with claims he cannot answer, and with debts he cannot pay. His income is equal to all the proper exigencies and reasonable expences of his station. He has plenty without superfluity, and he enjoys the pleasures of life without their sinful excesses. He is not chained down by
needful

needful circumstances to unceasing drudgery, but has leisure and opportunity to think, and to cultivate his mind. He is thus raised above the reach of the sordid temptations to steal. He has no reason, and less inclination, to be unjust. He has acted an upright part; his character is formed; he loves righteousness and hates iniquity.

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This being the case, he has no temptation arising from his condition to *lie*, another sin connected with poverty, from which Agur prays to be *far removed*.

There is a generous pride flowing from independence, which refining the principle of honour, makes a man delight in being fair and equitable in his dealings, and scorn the use of deceitful language. Lying, as will be explained more at large, in the sequel of these discourses, arises from two general causes: First, when we go in pursuit of an object that cannot be obtained without a sacrifice of truth: Secondly, when we have done something which we are ashamed or afraid should come to the knowledge of the world. Now, he whose life is in the right,

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right, who has no bad design to carry into execution, and has been guilty of no deed he wishes to conceal, is under no assignable motive to tell a lie; whereas the poor man who is guilty of theft, is tempted to this sin, lest his dishonesty should be discovered.

Last of all, Agur prays, not to be reduced to so miserable a condition of poverty, as to be induced by it to *take the name of his God in vain*.

A person is said to *take the name of God in vain*, when he is guilty of profane cursing and swearing. But that form of words has a higher meaning than this in Holy Scripture, and signifies the crime of *perjury*. For the same reason that a small temptation will make a thief lie, a greater, such as fear of fines, stripes, and imprisonment, will tempt him to perjure himself.

In most of cases, the magistrate has no other method of getting at the truth, and ascertaining the facts, on which his decisions, either in matters civil or criminal, are to be founded, than the oaths of witnesses,

nesses, or of parties concerned. They are hence a main hinge, on which the distribution of justice depends. *An oath*, says St. Paul, *for confirmation is an end of strife**. Perjury, or swearing falsely before a judge, is, therefore, a crime subversive of the principles and sacred ties by which mankind are united together in society. Of all abuses of speech it is the most daring and impious. It is calling, in a deliberate, premeditated, solemn manner, on the great Name of Jehovah, the omniscient omnipresent Being, the Searcher of hearts, the Lord God of truth, to attest a lie, and this, too, as we shall answer to him at the last tribunal.

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As it has been shewn, that a person in independent circumstances has no motives connected with his condition to seduce him to steal and lie; so, far less are there any temptations arising out of it, of such force and magnitude, as to make him commit the black sin of perjury.

* Heb. vi. 16.

But,

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But, further, it will follow from the supposition we have put, that he is placed entirely beyond the reach of the temptations which originate from poverty caused by misfortunes. The sun that rose propitious on his birth, continues to shine unclouded upon him. No mournful reverses of his affairs drive him forth to solitary glooms, or form in him habits of dangerous dissipation, or break a mind too erect to bend to the storm which beats upon it. The line of his love and his friendship is usually blessed, as it is formed by choice and affection, and not by considerations of a mercenary and political nature. He associates with his equals in ease and independence, passes quietly through life, his enjoyments many, his troubles and inquietudes few. He is not stung with the anguish of lamenting over the coldness of acquaintance, the ingratitude of those he has obliged, the treachery of friends, and the villainy of relations. Thus one source of our best felicity continues to flow upon him, in a copious and uninterrupted stream. He regards and

is regarded by his neighbours, entertains a
favourable opinion of human nature, and
acquiring from thence a benevolent turn of
sentiment, is happy in himself, and the
cause of happiness in others.

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As, by the hypothesis from which we are reasoning, he has not forfeited his birth-right, competency, by folly, imprudence, or wickedness; so he is not haunted with the fearful evils that were described under the third part of the first general head of discourse.

Such appear to be the causes upon which the first part of the prayer of Agur is founded. Very strong exceptions, however, may be produced against what has been said in support and illustration of them, as no general rule holds universally true.

There are many born and educated in poverty, who, in all their severe trials, preserve their integrity pure and untainted to the end. If greatness and nobility consist in the good qualities of the mind, these are truly great and noble characters. They may be concealed a while, like precious
jewels

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jewels in a mine. Their excellence is intrinsic, and will be brought forwards to public view and admiration, on that dread and awful day, when all worldly distinctions shall be abolished for ever; when it will not be inquired, What has been the rank we held in the state? whether we have been king or subject, high or low, rich or poor? but when the grand question will be, How have we acted the part and character assigned to us in the stage of life? They who shall have discharged the duties of an humble station well, will go off with applause, while they who have failed in those belonging to the higher departments of society, shall be condemned to everlasting infamy. *The servant faithful over two talents shall receive the approbation, and enter into the joy of his Lord, as well as the servant who was faithful over five *.*

There are others, again, who have come to poverty through misfortunes, who preserve their mind entire, their spirits unbroken, their views of our nature benevolent,

* Mat. xxv. 20—23.

and

to Poverty by Folly and Vice are exposed.

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and their acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence manly and resigned. This is a lofty exertion of piety, and attests that they are the pure gold, which the furnace of affliction may refine, but cannot destroy. Their recompense, like that of their suffering Redeemer, is sure.

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Lastly, Punishment has sometimes reformed the wicked, and taught fools to think. If aught below can check the career of vice and folly, it is the *rod*. Of its correcting beneficial effects, even the Saints of God have made their candid acknowledgment. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, confesses the Psalmist, but now have I kept thy word*. It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes †.*

On the other hand, as a further exception, there have been many placed in that very condition which formed the object of Agur's prayer, who have sunk into the lowest profligacy, and, after squandering away

* Ps. cxix. 67.

† Ibid. 71.

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their

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their substance, have been guilty of dishonesty, theft, lying, and perjury.

But although full allowance be made to these several exceptions, yet still the general proposition holds unquestionably true; That there are far greater, and far more numerous temptations to those sins, in a condition of poverty, than in circumstances of ease and independence.

S E R M O N IV.

Of the Temptations to which Riches
expose us.

PROV. xxx. 7, 8, 9.

*Two things have I required of thee, deny me
them not before I die. Remove far from
me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty
nor riches; feed me with food convenient
for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and
say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor,
and steal, and take the name of my God in
vain.*

HAVING considered at length the tempt-
ations to which we are exposed by
poverty, let us proceed to investigate the
causes, why the son of Jakeh prayed, that
he might not have riches. The danger
of being tempted by them to vanity and

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forgetfulness of God, is the reason which he himself assigns, for offering up this petition. *Remove, says he, far from me vanity; give me not riches; lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?*

Now, a person may be placed in an opulent situation by his birth, or he may be raised to it in these three ways: first, by good fortune, as it is called; secondly, by villainy and oppression; thirdly, by patient and virtuous industry. These different conditions, together with the temptations caused by them, we shall consider in the order now mentioned.

I. Of the temptations to which a man is exposed, who is placed in a situation of opulence by his birth.

The heir of a great estate soon begins to feel the importance that belongs to the rank in society in which he was born. His very infantine toys, his dress and amusements when a boy, the adulation of the domestics, visitors, and expectants of his family, received by him as he advances into youth, all conspire to implant
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in his opening mind, a strong principle of vanity. He sees others of the same age neither clothed, indulged, or courted like himself. His heart swells. He becomes conceited, assuming, and impatient of control; and concludes that he is a being of a different species.

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While he is under the rod of a tutor, or the frown of a parent, he may be compelled to make some effort in order to acquire knowledge. But no sooner is he set at liberty from these restraints, than he throws off the mask, and appears in his true colours. His increase in stature is no longer accompanied with a proportional increase in wisdom. He supposes that his riches will procure him respect, independent of all personal accomplishments. He despises the useful talents of the man of business, and loses all relish for the elegant pleasures of science and literature. He will not inure himself to the labour of application, to the pain of research, and to the severe and long-continued exertions of mind, which capacitate a man for thinking, and being useful in the departments of public life.

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The cultivation of the understanding being neglected in this shameful manner, his heart, likewise, is allowed to run waste. It becomes as the garden of the sluggard. Where flowers and fruits ought to grow in perfection, nothing but noisome weeds are produced. If he shall study to excel in any thing, it is in the sports of the field, in the artifices of the gambler, or, perhaps, in those shadowy ornaments, dignified of late, and so violently recommended under the name of the graces, learned by him at first, and worn ever after, at the expence of truth, honour, and integrity.

1. Let us now consider him placed at the head of his affairs, the sole and uncontrolled master of himself, and his estate; and let us enter, for a moment, into his feelings.

To part of this audience, attention to this subject is of the utmost importance.

When he contemplates his ample possessions; when he looks upon his splendid equipage, his sumptuous table, his rich attire; when he reflects on the number and variety of pleasures within his reach; and,

and, above all, when he compares his condition, with that of the great bulk of mankind, it is surely natural to feel a certain degree of vanity. This sentiment acquires strength, from his observing that others view his situation in the same light with himself. Riches, the chief source of influence in a civilized age, give him high importance. Many depend upon him for bread. He can occasionally benefit others, and can make those who contradict and oppose him feel the weight of his resentment. This increases his friends, and diminishes his enemies. A crowd of expectants flatter him. Pride uncovereth itself before him, beauty yields to his addresses, and even wisdom rejoiceth in his patronage. Wherever he goeth, he is received with respect. He is placed in the chair of honour at a feast, and is *saluted in the mercat place*. When he cometh unto an assembly, *his gold ring and goodly apparel* gain him deference, and *they say unto him, Sit thou in this good place*.

Is it easy for him, vain as he is in himself, to avoid being delighted with a reception

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ception founded on sentiments that coincide so perfectly with his own? Where is the wisdom to be found that shall detect, that all this courtesy is paid to the estate, and not to its proprietor? To one intoxicated with the incense of such profuse and grateful flattery can it ever occur, that, were he himself reduced to poverty, he would fall at the same time into a state of insignificance, and that his successor in wealth would be treated with the same deference, and possess the same influence which he now enjoys?

No. This is not the judgment he forms of things. He believes the world is right in their opinion of his importance, gives way to the pleasing illusion, and is affected with such sentiments as Nebuchadnezzar felt, when he said in the plenitude of his glory; *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty*?*

Being thus puffed up with vanity and self-conceit, he is exposed to folly and vice

* Dan. iv. 30.

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disapprobation of the sober and religious. He rather takes delight in provoking it. He is sometimes guilty of mad actions, and affects strange singularities in his dress, language, and in every part of his behaviour. He loves to be talked of, and gazed at; and frequently seems to have no other end in view, than to astonish others, with his extravagant and eccentric excesses.

2. By supplying the means of gratifying a voluptuous and sensual taste, riches are the main cause of inspiring it. *Whatsoever his eyes desireth, he keeps not from them, and he withholdeth not his heart from any joy**. This indulgence inflames more and more his appetites, and weakens his powers of temperance and self-command. His love for pleasure is thus continually on the increase, till it becomes his ruling passion.

Pleasure enjoyed beyond the boundaries of reason and innocence, is productive of many evils. It unbends the spring of activity which is natural to us, and hinders

* Eccl. ii. 10.

us from discharging, properly, the duties we owe to ourselves, our families, and our country. It corrupts the heart, destroys our relish for intellectual enjoyments, and abstracts us from the cultivation of those dispositions and habits, which ally us to the world of spirits. It has given rise to the most abominable vices, which have ever disgraced human nature, and have sunk it beneath that rank we hold in the scale of being. Hence pleasure was allegorized by the ancient moralists, into an enchantress, who possessed the magic power of transforming man into the filthiest beast of the field, incapable of any other happiness, than that of wallowing in the mire of sensuality.

Nor does pleasure confine her wasting influences to her own votaries alone. She moves in a larger sphere of desolation. She hath brought new plagues upon the earth, and hath clad disease, and even death, in new terrors. She hath laid youth, beauty, and innocence in ruins, hath brought the grey head in sorrow to the grave, and murdered

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dered the peace of virtuous families. The idol of the East, grim with the blood of infant sacrifice, was not worshipped with more melancholy victims, than those which are daily offered up at her polluted shrines.

*That riches make unto themselves wings, and flee away as an eagle towards heaven**, is a proverbial observation of Solomon, the truth of which none have so fatally proved, as the votaries of pleasure. Their lusts and appetites render them blind to the consequences of their wickedness. As there are no bounds to luxury, to imaginary wants, and unlawful enjoyment sought for in variety, so their expenditure, by exceeding their revenue, brings them soon to want. Should they have a propensity to gaming, the madness of one night may ruin them for ever. Thus riches in the hands of a prodigal are the certain road to poverty. Hence it is, that great estates are more liable to revolutions, than those which only afford a competency to their humbler, but far happier proprietors. Although expe-

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

dients,

dients, borrowed from the contrivance and usages of barbarians, have been adopted in order to remedy this supposed evil; yet, while the fortune has been saved to the family, the master of it has languished away his days in penury and debt.

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By a person enslaved to such debauched habits, and tottering on the brink of destruction, nothing is left undone to repair his shattered affairs, that he dares attempt. His miserable dependents are oppressed to the utmost. They struggle with racked rents, and unconscionable leases, till they are completely ruined. His vanity, now degenerated into pride, a disposition selfish and cruel, renders him perfectly regardless of their happiness.

Blessed are the people who live under the protection of equitable laws, and a good government! No motive but the dread of punishment, sets any bounds to his rapacity; were this removed, the plunder and desolation of a whole province could not satiate it.

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There are many possessed of riches, who, although they do not abandon themselves to such vicious and extravagant courses as have been now described, yet spend all their income without doing any intentional good. Such is the character drawn by our Saviour, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man is neither a debauchee, nor a spendthrift, nor a miser. Yet he is condemned to the place of torment: Why? Because he consumed his income in sumptuous and magnificent living, and gave nothing, not the very crumbs that fell from his table, to relieve a fellow-creature laid at his gate, in the utmost extremity of disease and poverty.

3. Riches, in others, are the cause of a disposition the reverse of those we have been now considering, namely, avarice.

A selfish man, instead of enjoying thankfully the good things bestowed upon him by indulgent Providence, contracts a love for money itself. From being frugal he becomes parsimonious, and then *greedy of gain*. He grudges to part with any thing,
and

and places his whole delight in adding continually to his stock. The hoarding appetite strikes root, increases in vigour apace, and grows into one of the most uniform, fixed, and lasting principles of human action. Like a secret-working disease, it gains ground imperceptibly, taints first the parts next to it, spreads wider and wider its baneful influence, till at last the constitution is wholly corrupted by it.

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Avarice admits of no competing passion, but either assimulates them to its own nature, or destroys them. It disarms pleasure of her powers to charm and enchant; it converts pride into meanness; and makes ambition stoop from his eagle flight, to grovel in the dust. It roots out all pity and compassion; all sense of honour and shame; all friendship and affection; all generous and patriotic sentiments. Although avarice sprang from selfishness, yet monster-like it turns upon its parent, and devours selfishness itself. A thorough miser becomes at last deaf even to his own wants, and to every just claim of his nature. He

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scarce allows himself the common necessities of life, and will not lay out any thing to render his condition more comfortable. He is as much exposed to cold and hunger and nakedness, as the beggar who in vain solicits charity at his gate. He forgets himself as much as the rest of mankind. His affections center upon one single object, which commands and occupies his whole soul. His gold is unto him as companion and friend, as brother and sister, as father and mother, as his saviour and his god.

Mean time the violence of his avarice fills him with perpetual care. He is tormented with a thousand imaginary fears, that, like as many fiends, haunt him wherever he goes. Even in possession of the greatest plenty, he is sometimes seized with the horrible apprehension of dying of hunger. As he advances in years, when the rest of the passions become weak, or cease to influence us, his covetousness continues to increase in strength. It sets disease at defiance, attends him on his death-bed, and

and maintains its sovereignty over him, till his last pulse hath beat.

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Lastly, Riches make a man disregard or hate religion: in the language of the prayer of Agur, they make him forget, or *deny God, and say, Who is the Lord?*

Pleasures within our reach, and which we can easily obtain, have something more seductive in their nature, than even the wisdom of Solomon could resist. Like objects seen through a magnifying and flattering medium, they are perceived enlarged in their size, and in meretricious colours; while distant good, like distant things, seems dull and diminished. Hence it is argued by the children of this world: Let us seize the present moment; opportunity ought never to be slighted; time is ever on the wing, and flies fast away; *let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die* *.

Now this kind of temptation operates with greatest force on the opulent. For

* Is. xxii. 13.

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their riches, by enlarging the sphere of their enjoyment, and multiplying the resources by means of which they can fulfil their desires, give them so habitual a propensity to pleasure, that they disregard or overlook all consequences. For immediate gratification they will hazard their health, their riches, and their reputation. Even in the clear foresight of these evils, they have not the resolution to stop. They see the precipice below them, and rush down its ruinous steep.

Is it, then, to be supposed, that such as act so desperate a part with regard to their present interest, will lend an ear to the warnings of religion? Will they who set at nought such heavy temporal calamities, be afraid of the effects of their wickedness in the world to come? Will the punishments of hell terrify those, to whom disease, dishonour, and bankruptcy give no sort of alarm? Surely no. They who despise the present, will much more despise the future judgments of the Lord, and will persevere,

persevere, as long as circumstances will permit, in their sinful courses.

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If we appeal to the annals of the rich, or consult the volume of experience concerning them, we shall, accordingly, find few names on record, that profess much regard to religion. Besides the reasons already assigned for their being so improvident of futurity, we must take into the account their aversion at the spirit of christianity, at the character of its Author, and the prospects he opened into the state beyond the grave.

The Gospel is addressed to mankind, considered, not as inhabitants of this world, but as candidates for glory and immortality. We are not instructed by it, how to amass riches, how to arrive at power and influence, and how to increase and multiply present enjoyments. On the contrary, we are taught to *look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are tem-*

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poral;

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peral ; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.*

We are commanded to despise riches, to deny ourselves to worldly lusts, to correct whatever is irregular in our passions, to live a life of reason and purity, and to act under the habitual impresson, that we are, one day, to give an account to God of all the deeds done in the body. Vanity, pride, sensuality, covetousness, rapacity, and the other sins to which the rich are prone, are all forbidden, as disqualifying us for enjoying the company of saints and angels. We are informed, that meekness and humility are the most becoming ornament of our frail and imperfect nature ; that such as have no higher ambition than to be *clothed in purple and fine linen, and to fare sumptuously every day*†, will not be admitted into the heavenly paradise ; and that the worshippers of Mammon cannot be the worshippers of God.

* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

† Luke, xvi. 19.

With

With the principles and rules of conduct which Jesus delivered to the world, his own example most harmoniously corresponded. Mighty in council, still mightier in deeds, he was the sublime model of virtue, which he had so beautifully exhibited in his doctrines. He was meek and lowly; *he was full of grace and truth**. He never sought after riches, nor used his miraculous powers to obtain the necessities, far less the comforts of life; but lived contented with the small portion of the good things of it, which the bounty of his friends, who were themselves in indigence, could afford to bestow upon him. He scorned to stoop to the gratifications which constitute the chief good of the sensualist and voluptuary. He made choice of a state of sufferings, as the most proper condition for enabling him to fulfil the purposes of his mission. In the execution of a scheme, altogether unprecedented in this world, or planned in the councils of heaven, his success was complete. He resisted every temptation, fur-

* John, i. 14.

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mounted every difficulty, and attested on mount Calvary, that as in life he had been proof against all the allurements of pleasure, so in death he was not to be conquered by ignominy and torture.

Can a character of this elevated and heroic spirit, can a religion that would inspire into mankind the glorious ambition of rivaling angels, meet with approbation from those entirely absorbed in gratifications the same in kind with those which form the sole and ultimate happiness of the beasts that perish? Impossible! We must possess the faculty of perceiving moral and intellectual beauty, otherwise we can have no conception nor love of its excellence; for the same cause, that the blind cannot be delighted with colours, and that those can have no relish for music who are destitute of taste for the sweetness of melody, and who have no powers to feel the harmony of agreeable sounds.

It will follow from this reasoning, that the christian religion, as taught and reduced

to practice, in its severest and most difficult lessons, by our Saviour, will either be not comprehended at all, or, if it be understood, will not be approved of, far less be adopted as a rule of manners, by such characters as we have been now considering. Instead of commanding their esteem, it excites in them a sentiment made up of contempt, hatred, and astonishment, that settles in a deep-rooted enmity at the very name of Christ. Like Micaiah, in ancient times, his religion *doth not prophesy good concerning them, but evil**; so they in turn hate it, as Ahab hated the prophet. They exclude it from their thoughts, or treat it with ridicule. Should fearful apprehensions concerning a judgment to come, intrude upon them, they endeavour to repress them, by studying the witticisms and sneering arguments of minute philosophers, which they retail upon occasions, as the imitative bird repeats a few words by rote. In this manner do they lay aside all inward restraints of

* 1 Kings, xxii. 8.

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a religious nature; and therefore, in the words of Agur, they may be said to *deny God, and to say, Who is the Lord?*

II. As some are born to riches, there are others whom the Providence of God has raised, unexpectedly and without any exertions of their own, from a low estate, to opulence.

Few can bear so violent a transition with a calm and moderate spirit. The sudden elevation to so great a height, usually makes them giddy; and, according as they are of a gentle, or of an imperious temper, blows them up with insufferable vanity, or with pride. The change is not always attended with the happiness expected from it. If the sphere of their enjoyments be enlarged, it is at the same time disturbed with many painful sensations they were never troubled with formerly.

The fear of being considered as still belonging to their former rank, fills them with a restless and tormenting jealousy. In company

company they are ready to misconstrue looks, words, and attention; and are ever on the rack, lest sufficient honour be not rendered unto them. The disrespect of a single individual shall blast their happiness, as the withheld homage of Mordecai made Haman miserable in the fulness of his glory. They avoid the company of those, formerly their intimates, and of friends, to whom, in their adversity, they were obliged. Their table is furnished with guests that may do them honour, and they are afraid of admitting to it such persons, as might remind them of the dunghill, from whence, like the mushroom, they sprang hastily up. They fawn upon their superiors; assume airs of dignity and importance with others, and look down with contempt on those in the condition they once occupied. They belong to that *generation* of whom Agur says, *O how lofty are their eyes, and their eye-lids are lifted up* *.

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But mark their recompense. Hereditary honour smiles scornful upon them, sees

* Prov. xxx. 13.

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through their flimsy covering of affectation, and repays with severe, though concealed observation, their low efforts to disguise their original. Wisdom learns lowliness of mind from their presumption, and dignified competency blesses God, for the humble but *convenient food* with which he is *fed*, and that he is not thus exposed, in the character of a fool, to the mockery and derision of the world.

III. Others rise to a condition rich and opulent, in these two ways; first, by fraud and deceit; secondly, by violence and oppression.

1. The sinner who belongs to the first of these classes, is full of cunning, guile, falsehood, and the most profound attention to self-interest. Afraid of drawing upon himself the attention of the public, he conceals his vanity, and carefully avoids making a parade of his wealth. Having wrought like the mole constantly in darkness, he is sensible that his safety consists in it, and that the light is dangerous to him. He has,

has, besides, an habitual baseness of sentiment, that renders him averse to that splendour and magnificence, in which vanity and pride rejoice to be displayed.

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There is likewise much hypocrisy in his composition; so that, instead of carrying on open hostilities against religion, he puts on the form of godliness. His creed is the creed of a pharisee, which he adopts to serve two ends; the one to deceive his neighbours, the other to pacify the remonstrances of his conscience; in which attempts he is usually, but not always, successful. Sometimes his knavery is detected, and he is brought to shame, if not to punishment. The consciousness that he is a villain, though a secret known only to himself, fills him at times with desponding apprehensions. He is sensible that his real character is an object of disapprobation to every righteous mind, and that the God of justice and truth will one day call him to an account for his sins. He thinks on a judgment to come, and trembles; but his trem-

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trembling; like that of Felix, does not lead him to repentance.

2. Another *gathers him silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings**, by wading through seas of blood, and by the plunder and desolation of whole provinces. It is not in times of peace, nor in a region like ours, that this phenomenon is to be seen. Like the angry meteors of heaven, it flashes in the tempests of war, and blazes as yet unextinguished in the far distant eastern hemisphere. From thence too often we see returning a man glittering with spoils, and astonishing his countrymen with his revenues, and the princely splendour in which he lives. Here, if in any case, the prayer of Agur stands justified in its largest extent; for like *the man of sin and son of perdition, he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped* †.

O my soul, come not thou into his secret; unto his assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!

* Eccl. ii. 8.

† 2 Thes. ii. 3, 4.

Yet

Yet shall he not escape. Diffipation, S E R M.
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pomp, and flattery, cannot quench in his remembrance the dire steps by which he ascended to greatness. Remorse steps with him into the gilded chariot, attends him to the court of kings, and oft at the fearful midnight hour, draws aside the silken curtains of his bed, and glares hideous upon him. Behind her, in threatening vision, arise the ghosts of the murdered. Some point to their ghastly wounds, that bleed afresh to his disturbed fancy. Others appear in forms pale and wasted to death by famine. The scene of his enormous cruelties comes in view. He looks upon it, and *fearfulness and trembling seize upon him, and horror overwhelms him. His heart is sore pained, and the terrors of death fall upon him**.

Where now are fled his dreams of happiness, and where the enjoyments of which he assured himself in his immense treasures? All, all is now felt to be worse than vanity,

* Psalm lv. 4, 5.

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and more bitter than vexation of spirit. In vain, to screen him from public vengeance, has eloquence been bribed to prostitute its enchanting powers. In vain have corrupt senates sanctified his crimes. In vain has courtly favour beamed, and titled glory perched on his head. There is a voice which speaks when all the world is silent, from whose award there lies no appeal to any human tribunal. This is the warning voice which bids him prepare. It banishes all peace for ever from his bosom. It covers his horizon with despair, and makes him prefer the untried pains of hell, to a life thus irretrievably wretched and miserable.

Now a man in moderate circumstances has not the same temptations, to run into the excesses of pleasure, dissipation, and covetousness, to which the rich are exposed. He is possessed of a competency, which enables him to maintain a decent and respectable place in society by good œconomy. He has little to squander away, or to hoard up. That little will not admit of his enter-
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to which Riches expose us.

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ing upon an expensive course of life. It is not in itself an object to excite in him the principle of avarice. He is therefore induced by his situation to pay proper attention to his affairs, and he turns out a man of activity in some line of business or another.

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Perceiving that his happiness, and the reception he is to meet with from the world, depend entirely on his behaviour, he is prompted to act that part which is deserving of success and encouragement. He feels his situation altogether different from that of a haughty rich man. He knows that he has no retired estate, no resources in his wealth, no crowd of base sycophants to shelter him from disgrace, if he shall be a villain, or an unprincipled libertine. On these accounts, and oft for better causes, he conforms prudently with the habits of life which are becoming his station.

He has no cause to be *vain*, for he sees numbers on the same level with himself, and many that outshine him in every article

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cle of conveniency and luxury. The mortifications he is sure to meet with, should he become arrogant and assuming, teach him a lesson, which great affluence scorns to learn, that *pride was not made for man.*

Lastly, The even and regular tenour of his ways disposes him to lend a kindly ear to the voice of religion. There is nothing so violent and intoxicating in his enjoyments, as to make him blind to the concerns of a future state of existence. He is thus led to honour the sacred institutions of his country, and to consider himself in the light of a being accountable to his Creator, for the deeds done in the body. Instead of *forgetting God, and saying, Who is the Lord?* he endeavours to live the life of the righteous, that he *may die the death of the righteous, and his last end may be like his*.*

The same observation, which was made in the close of the first general head of dis-

* Numb. xxiii. 10.

course, must be repeated here ; That there are particular exceptions to every thing which has been advanced, in illustration of the grounds on which the second part of the prayer of Agur rests. There are spirits, the ornament of their rank, and the glory of our nature, whom no degree of riches can possibly corrupt ; of an enlightened understanding, and a benevolent heart ; free of low vanity and pride ; the patterns of virtue and the most exemplary piety. And there are many, too many, in the middle station of life, who are vain, proud, selfish, profligate, and irreligious. Still, however, the general observation holds true, That riches expose us to greater temptations, than a moderate portion of the good things of this life.

Other moralists, besides Agur, arrived at the same conclusion. They remarked, that nothing could more clearly demonstrate the value put upon riches, by the Sovereign of the universe, than the distribution he is pleased to make of them, and the contemptible and vicious characters on whom

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they are most profusely lavished. But why appeal to inferior authorities? He, *who knew what was in man* *, and who could form a just estimate of the strength of every temptation, made this striking observation; *That it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven* †.

Let us all then join Agur in his prayer to God; *Remove far from us vanity and lies; give us neither poverty nor riches; feed us with food convenient for us: lest we be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest we be poor and steal, and take the name of our God in vain. Amen.*

* John, ii. 25.

† Matth. xix. 24.

S E R M O N V.

On Lying.

PROV. XII. 19.

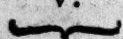
*The lip of truth shall be established for ever,
but a lying tongue is but for a mo-
ment.*

ON the expression of the countenance,
and on the movement and gestures of
the body, the language of the passions is
often strongly imprinted. This did not
escape the observing eye of Solomon, the
earliest on record who inquired into the
nature of things. He availed himself of
the discovery, and, by substituting at times
the agency or the effect of the animating
principle on the body, for the principle
itself, gave high embellishment and signi-
ficance to his maxims of morality.

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We have an instance of this in the text.

Truth and falsehood proceed from the mind.

The organs of speech are the instruments of communicating to others what we think, or what we intend to misrepresent. Hence, they are used by him proverbially, as being true or false in themselves, according as they are employed to speak truth or falsehood.

The lip of truth, says he, shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

By *the lip of truth*, then, is to be understood a man of veracity, and by *a lying tongue*, a man of falsehood. It is asserted, by the royal moralist, of the one, that he *shall be established for ever*; and of the other, that he shall be *but for a moment*.

In treating upon this subject, I propose, First, to describe the characters contained in the text; Secondly, to illustrate the conclusion of Solomon concerning them; Last of all, to make some observations, chiefly of a practical nature.

I. I am

I. I am to describe the characters of the *man of truth*, and the *man of falsehood*. SERM.
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What is the nature of that commerce which takes place between pure spirits?—Whether they perceive intuitively the designs and dispositions of each other? or, whether they see and are seen as they are in themselves? are questions we shall never be able to solve on this side of the grave. In our present condition, our thoughts cannot be seen by man. In order to remedy this defect in the powers of our discernment, language, or, to speak more properly, the capacity of acquiring language, was bestowed upon us. This is the medium by which we communicate our sentiments to one another, and are qualified to enjoy the pleasure, and reap the advantages, which arise from the society of our fellow-creatures. The man who speaks as he thinks, is the *man of truth*. The man who speaks one thing, and thinks another, is a *liar*.

A lie, then, is a deliberate intentional act of deceit. It is a base imposition on

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the faith of others. It is a violation of that holy law dictated by our nature, established by common consent, and sanctified by the authority of heaven; That we ought to abide in the truth, and make our words a fair transcript of our thoughts and sentiments.

Although there is an infinity in error and falsehood, truth can be spoken only in one way. There is consequently no variety of character in the friends of truth, when they are considered in relation to, and in comparison with, that moral principle. This is the same in all, arises from the same cause, and produces like effects on their temper and manners. They may differ in matters that have no connection with, or dependence upon it: but wherever truth is concerned, they are one; even as truth, like its divine Original, is but one.

But falsehood, or lying, appears in as many forms, as there are bad principles which give rise to it, and as there are wicked plans, in the concealment
or

or execution of which, it constitutes a part. Liars, therefore, differ from one another; and exhibit almost as much variety in their characters, as in the countenances with which they tell them. It were an endless task, to attempt a description of their differential peculiarities. Suffice it to delineate the leading features of the more notorious classes, into which they may be distributed.

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1. Some contract a taste for the *marvellous*. Of a wild and incorrect imagination, they never see objects in a distinct point of vision, but through a strange medium, which magnifies or diminishes, illuminates or darkens, multiplies or decreases them, according to the humour which is uppermost in their brain. They delight to astonish others with wonderful stories, and prodigious adventures. Their language takes a tone from their ruling passion. They speak always in the highest degree; every thing they have seen or heard, is best or worst, greatest or least; nothing is described as it is in itself, or as it really happened.

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Weak and credulous, they are daily adding to their stock of lies every idle tale they hear; till at last, quitting the boundaries of all which is probable, they will sit down with a grave face, and deliberately tell the most monstrous absurdities, and most palpable contradictions.

2. *Vanity* is a copious source of lying, especially when accompanied, as it usually is, with imbecillity of mind. *I have not sat*, says David, *with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers* *. Ambitious to appear men of consequence, the *vain* endeavour to supply their want of merit, by pretending to talents, influence, and virtues, of which they are not possessed. They are specious, forward, and boastful. They are full of low cunning, and have the art of adapting their discourse to the company they are addressing. Before the ignorant, how learned! Before strangers, how important, how nobly related, how much admired! How fierce in the absence of danger! How many insinuations and

* Psalm xxvi. 4.

little circumstances relative to their own importance, are thrown in by them into all their stories? Still they are the heroes of the tale, and every character and incident in it are introduced to their own praise. To add to the evil, they are notorious, especially if they be *cowards*, for cursing and swearing, being afraid, after all, that their pretensions will not be believed, without this presumptuous and wicked accompaniment.

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3. Others accustom themselves to the study of what is *absurd* and *ridiculous* in the behaviour of their neighbours. The habit grows upon them by indulgence, till at last they come to view the world as a stage, where mankind are acting their several parts, like fools and madmen. In solemn scenes, in characters of wisdom and goodness, and even in mournful events, they search for materials, wherewith afterwards to exercise their vein. The fool's glass, which they carry constantly about with them, twisting, distorting, disfiguring, discolouring, and deforming every object at which they look, they become strangers to

SERM. to the true shapes and appearances of things.
 V. Their conversation is void of all truth, and
 consists in turning every thing into ridicule. No character is drawn by them as it exists, and no action described as it happened. Empty as *the crackling of thorns under a pot, is their laughter* *. The applause, with which they are heard in company, stimulates them to a continued display of their powers. They are intoxicated with it, and will say any thing, true or not true, to be the cause of mirth. When no materials are to be found, pure invention must compose the piece, in the colouring of which it seldom happens, but that envy and malice lend a ready and an active hand.

4. The *sycophant*, the liar next to be considered, is distinguishable by the suppleness of his manners, his accommodating spirit, and the fear of giving offence. His words are smooth, his carriage insinuating, and his cunning is veiled under the agreeable covering of complaisance. In the prosecution of his schemes, he makes a

* Eccles. vii. 6.

constant

constant sacrifice of truth. According to David, persons of this description *speak vanity, every one with his neighbour; with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak.* They bow assent to what they do not believe, and conceal what they think. They can smile when they are angry, and frown when they are pleased. They affect to have no will of their own, cringe to the humours of their patron, and, by a delicate species of flattery, rally and oppose him in company, and heap praises upon him in his absence, when they know that these will be echoed to him by others. They are often successful, and verify the observation of Solomon, that *a man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet!*

Akin to this class, there are others of a soft and courteous address, whose words betray no symptoms of guile. There is nothing in their talk, of the marvellous, the boastful; of the lying humourist, or the flatterer. Yet experience proves that no reliance is to be placed in what they say

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or promise. They are to be found scattered in all ranks, but they abound chiefly in the walks of political life *.

5. From an alliance of the most-remote antiquity, formed betwixt guile and cruelty, springs the most formidable, if not likewise the most numerous, family of liars. These are, the slanderers, the back-biters, the whisperers, the busy-bodies, and, in short, all who employ their tongues in speaking evil of their neighbour. Whether they detract from his merit, or aggravate his faults, or lay to his charge sins which he never committed, into which three particulars

* This character is finely drawn by the pencil of Milton :

————— On the other side uprofe
Belial, in act more graceful and humane.
A fairer person lost not heaven. He seem'd
For dignity compos'd, and high exploit.
But all was false and hollow, though his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels ; for his thoughts were low,
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Tim'rous and slothful ; yet he pleas'd the ear,
And with persuasive accents thus began.

Paradise Lost, B. II.

the

the whole of evil-speaking is resolvable, they depart from the truth. The wilful misrepresentation of men and manners, is lying in one of its most noxious forms. But the prosecution of this subject is referred to a more proper place in the sequel of these discourses *. Let it suffice, then, at present to remark, that hatred, envy, rivalry, party-spirit, and the malignant passions, are thus chiefly to be dreaded, where the man of violence dares not openly take his revenge, nor the assassin draw his midnight dagger, with impunity.

6. *Hypocrisy*, that species of villainy which aims to take advantage of the credulity of mankind, by pretences to superior sanctity, is the cause of perpetual falsehood. The words of a hypocrite are guarded, deceitful, and ensnaring. He avoids whatever is profane and irreligious in his discourse. But as it is impossible for him to carry on his designs, and at the same time speak the truth, and as he is afraid to tell a downright lie, he is obliged to frame a language

* See Serm. vii, viii, ix.

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of the most profound dissimulation. He is slow and hesitating in making an answer; for he dreads in others the subtlety of his own heart. He uses ambiguous terms, is oracular in what he says, and equivocating in his words and promises.

A man is said to equivocate, who expresses himself in terms capable of two meanings; the one, to mislead the judgment of his neighbour; the other, to serve as a salvo, should he be challenged for dissingenuity, or to quiet a conscience already corrupted. The equivocating hypocrite has not *the lip of truth*. The intention to deceive, is the essence of a lie; and it makes no odds in the sin, whether it be told in ambiguous language, or in that which is positively false.

7. Distinguishable by the degree of atrocity, but not by the kind and nature of his guilt, the perjurer next demands our notice. He is summoned to give his evidence before a magistrate, concerning a matter of fact, on which a process depends, and he swears to a falsehood.

In

In the varied intercourse of society, and in the infinitude of business and commercial transactions, disputes must unavoidably arise concerning property and the rights of mankind. In order to terminate these agreeably to justice, and to bring criminals to punishment, an oath is the ultimate step which can be taken by a judge. To conscience, in the last resort, the sacred appeal is made. If, unworthy of her trust, this inward monitor shall give false evidence; if, instead of diffusing light, she shall throw darkness on the subject of investigation; then, she studies to defeat the ends of justice, and to dissolve the ties which bind mankind together in society.

To utter a falsehood in a manner so solemn, and on occasions so important, and this, too, when attended with such dangerous consequences, is justly regarded as a crime punishable by law. All enlightened legislators have, accordingly, enacted severe penalties against it.

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We attempt not to extenuate the guilt of perjury; but this we may be allowed to observe, that the difference betwixt that sin and common lying, appears very inconsiderable to a righteous man. He who puts a proper value upon truth, and who lives under the habitual impression of the omnipresence of God, will regard his word as no less obligatory than the most formal of oaths. Oaths, and the other fences and strong holds of law, were not *made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for liars, and for perjured persons* *.

8. With the *false prophet* I shall close the catalogue of habitual liars.

The false prophet is one who pretends to know the will of the gods, to predict future events, to award diseases and misfortunes, and to point out a shorter and an easier way to heaven, than the road of

* 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

virtue.

virtue. Varying in name and appearance, but of the same character in reality, persons of this description are to be found in all ages, countries, governments, and forms of religion under the sun. They were the Diviners among the Egyptians, the Wisemen of the Chaldeans, the Pythoneesses of the Greeks, and the Augurs and Haruspices of Rome. They were the Prophets, inspired by a lying spirit, who flourished in the courts of the wicked kings of Jerusalem and Samaria. They are, at present, the Dreamer-of-dreams in the western continent, the Conjurers and Magicians of the East; and the Shamans scattered over the vast plains of Tartary. They are the Workers of miracles in the church of Rome, and the Teachers, by whatever Antinomian name or Pharisaic distinction known, who disgrace their Protestant profession, by concealing, corrupting, and changing into a lie, *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Finally, every person who makes religion an engine to hurt and deceive others; every preacher who does not endeavour to understand the

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Gospel; or who, understanding it, adapts it to the taste of a wicked world, or converts it into an instrument of civil policy, for the purpose of serving a party, and promoting his own interest; belong to this class of, perhaps, the most unprincipled of all liars.

But besides those habitually guilty of lying, there are others who occasionally fall into that sin, for the two following causes. First, when they have done something foolish, imprudent, or wicked, which they are ashamed of, and want to conceal: this is a rock on which thousands make shipwreck of a good conscience. Secondly, when they have embarked in a scheme, which they cannot accomplish, without a sacrifice of truth. To this number belong *the libertine, the unfair trader, the gambler, the sharper*; and, in short, all who take advantage of the ignorance and credulity of their neighbour, to enrich themselves, or to rise to undue preferment.

All

All kinds of lying and falsehood may be resolved into these two causes. SERM.
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In the one case, lying is the parent; and, in the other, it is the offspring of sin. But when once the fence of truth is broken down, the breach is seldom reparable. One lie lays the foundation for another, that again for a third and a fourth, and so on in progression. The habit in dissimulation gradually forms, till that which was adopted as an occasional expedient, becomes fixt in the character. When the mind has arrived at this pitch of profligacy, it is prepared to enter upon any course of wickedness, which *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life**, may plan out. Falsehood is thus a foil, upon which the most part of iniquity may be raised. Hence our Saviour, reproving the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, uses these forcible expressions: *Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the be-*

* John, i. 17.

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In strong contrast with these deceitful children of the devil, appears the man of truth. He comes forth in the garb of simplicity; innocence sheds a glory around him; firmness and honour guard his steps; fidelity and justice lead him onwards on his way. His eye looks steadily fixt on heaven, and his walk to it is along a straight path, declining neither to the right hand, nor to the left.

He has no desire to deceive; because he has committed no deed, and has projected no plan, of a dishonourable or hurtful nature. Sincere and undisguised, he is, like Nathaniel, *an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*†. His words are plain and artless, unambiguous and unequivocal. What he speaks, is strictly conformable to his feel-

* John, viii. 44.

† John, i. 47.

ings and apprehension of things. He does not court applause by pretensions to merit not his own; nor put on the cloak of vanity and hypocrisy to impose upon others. He scorns to flatter with his lips, to fawn upon the great, or cringe to the humours of the giddy multitude.

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He does no hurt to his neighbour by taking up and circulating evil reports against him, by aspersing his merit, or aggravating his faults. The charms of truth, in no part of his behaviour, appear more amiable, than in the gentle and candid manner with which he treats the reputation of others. And as high sensibility to what is right and wrong in conduct, is the concomitant of the love of veracity; so while *he honour-eth them that fear the Lord, a vile person is condemned in his eyes* *.

Should he fall into sin, he will disdain to conceal it by telling a lie. He will have the nobleness of mind to confess and acknowledge himself in the fault, if any ne-

* Psalm xv. 3.

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cessity is laid upon him to speak on the subject. This determined adherence to truth, puts him rigorously on his guard to do nothing, but what he can defend, and avow to the world. Time, in its progress, gives stability to his virtuous resolutions; and the grace and blessing of God, that are bestowed on every sincere endeavour to obey him, strengthens and confirms him in them.

Lastly, the same principle that so beautifully regulates his behaviour in the ordinary commerce of life, marks the spirit of his devotional character. He is the true worshipper and servant of the one only living and true God. His creed is the result of an impartial inquiry into the nature and evidences of religion, arising from an ardent desire to know what is the acceptable will of the Lord. Human authority, however great and respectable, he regards as dubious and fallible at best, as often erroneous, and, when blindly confided in, as the primary source of the worst corruptions of

of Christianity. Therefore, in all his doubts and difficulties, concerning the terms of our acceptance with God, and the concerns of immortality, he carries up his appeal to the unerring standard of truth, revealed to us in Holy Scripture. He trusts implicitly in the decisions there recorded. He knows and will obey no other master, but the Lord Jesus Christ. If he falls into any error, it is not from design, but from the weakness inseparable from human nature. Should he fill the honourable station of teaching religion to others, he makes the conviction wrought upon his own judgment, by a candid investigation of its everlasting truths, the sacred and immutable rule of his ministry.

Such is the citizen of Zion, such the man *who shall abide in the tabernacle of the Lord, and dwell in his holy hill**; and of such, and such only, shall the future kingdom of Christ consist.

* Psalm xv. 1.

S E R M O N VI.

On Lying.

PROV. XII. 19.

*The lip of truth shall be established for ever,
but a lying tongue is but for a moment.*

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HAVING thus taken a cursory review of the more notorious classes, into which *liars* may be divided, and placed in contrast with them *the man of truth*; let us next proceed, agreeably to the general plan of discourse, to illustrate what Solomon asserts concerning them. *The lip of truth*, says he, *shall be established for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.* Stript of its proverbial dress, his meaning is simply this, That the advantages

tages derived from falsehood are at best of a temporary nature, whereas truth is the foundation of permanent felicity.

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In support of what is here advanced by the wise man, let us shortly examine into these three particulars :

First, whether truth or falsehood best promotes our present interest ?

Secondly, which of them is most conformable to the law of our nature ?

Thirdly, which of them will secure to us the favour and approbation of that Being, to whom we are accountable for all our actions, and on whom our happiness is finally to depend ? From the result of which, the truths contained in the text will be fully vindicated.

1. Let us examine, whether truth or falsehood best promotes our present interest ?

We are so formed by our Creator, as to be pleased with the real appearances of things. Ignorance is painful to us, and
all

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all manner of imposition is vexatious and irritating. The man who is candid, who speaketh the truth as it is in his heart, and who is inflexible in his good resolutions, is the natural object of our love and esteem. Through the openness of his language, and the simplicity of his manners, it is delightful to discern a heart full of innocence ; as in the material world it is pleasant to behold the pellucid stem and transparent fruit of a few beautiful plants, scattered thin, like those of his kind, over the face of the earth,

In the multifarious commerce of life, there is not only no danger, but the most perfect security, in transacting business with him. This extends his connections, enlarges the sphere of his ability to benefit himself and his family ; and, debarring the accident of unfortunate times and chances, confers upon his undertakings all that success his merit deserves. The good are desirous to promote his interest ; the wicked, rebuked by his virtue, have a dislike to injure him ; none are afraid of him, and
all

all wish to employ, or be employed by him. SERM.
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Behold ! with what reverential awe his opinions are attended to, and his judgments are received. For wisdom and truth are coëval ; they spring from the same fountain of light, flourish together, and are *from everlasting to everlasting*. He is appointed to offices of trust, and consulted in matters of difficulty. To him the arbitration of differences amongst neighbours is referred. To him the forlorn and friendless resort for advice. To him the guardianship of orphans, and the dying charge of perplexed and intricate affairs, are bequeathed,

If friendship be the source of very refined pleasures, as certainly it is, the man of truth has faculties fit to relish them ; whereas a liar is utterly incapable of that open flow of sentiment, and that consent of mind, which unite virtuous spirits together. It is reciprocal confidence in words, and adherence to vows, that render the

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the marriage union holy and blessed. Remove conjugal fidelity, and you take away along with it domestic peace, the first and best of human enjoyments. And what is this fidelity, but a word which imports, that the love betwixt husband and wife is real, and not pretended? In short, whether as a public or private citizen; whether as a father or son, master or servant; whether as a brother, neighbour, or acquaintance; the man of veracity is beloved, honoured, and esteemed, by all who know, or who are connected with him.

A liar, from the consciousness that he is the proper object of disapprobation were his character known, is obliged, in order to escape observation, to study plausibility in what he says, and to clothe his falsehoods in the guise of truth. But this, like the other works of darkness, is difficult to be done. Nothing is easier than to speak as we think; but to make a lie pass for reality, requires forethought and address. It may however be accomplished by him. Man-kind

kind may not, at first, be suspicious of his motives, and discover that his words are at variance with his sentiments. Yet, except in a few instances, afterwards to be specified, wickedness of this sort will not always conceal. To support one lie, there is usually necessity for a continued train of equivocations and untruths; and these too fortified by hypocrites with solemn protestations of their innocence, and by profligates with impudent oaths. The consequence is, that they fall into inconsistencies and contradictions. The more they speak, the more they are embarrassed. Like one floundering in a mire, the farther they advance, the deeper and deeper they plunge, till the secret is disclosed; *that their lip is not the lip of truth, and their tongue the tongue of a liar.*

When this discovery is made of any person, what he says is heard ever after with reserve and disbelief. It is presumed, that he who tells one lie, may tell another. Though he should be speaking in truth and sincerity,

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sincerity, he is constantly suspected of the contrary. His character is branded with infamy. As a neighbour he is distrusted, as a man of business he is avoided; as a friend, no confidence is reposed in him. He meets with no encouragement, and those who are laid under the necessity of transacting any thing with him, guard themselves against his machinations, by all the securities provided by law, to lay restraints upon fraud and iniquity.

But although, in the course of providence, truth is the natural way to honour and riches, and falsehood leads to infamy and want; yet these, like all other general rules, have their exceptions.

Many, for example, have amassed great riches, by deep-laid and well-executed plans of deceit. If, in the event, their reputation suffered, this gave them small concern, as they found themselves placed in a condition of independence, beyond the reach of the arm of justice. To the Pharisee, hypocrisy lends her veil, under whose

whose covert he devours widows houses, and the provision of the orphan and the fatherless. It was the flattering tongue of the false prophets of old, which rendered them the favourites of the idolatrous kings of Israel. It was the manly avowal of disagreeable, but salutary, truths, that threw the servants of God into prison; that fed them with *the bread of adversity*, and gave them to drink of *the water of affliction*. To gratify the multitudes with doctrines palatable to their depraved taste, and thereby to make gain of their credulity, lying teachers *prophecy smooth things, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace.* To obtain honours and lucrative places, courtiers shut out truth from the ear of kings; and pretended patriots use the giddy populace, as the tools of their ambition. But chiefly in times of persecution, are the maxims of Solomon, in the text, reversed; and then it is, that *the lying tongue is established*, and that *the lip of truth* is put to silence. Although to these and the like exceptions full account be allowed, yet still it holds just,

That

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That a good reputation and success in the world, are the natural attendants upon truth; and that shame and discouragement follow after, and usually overtake falsehood.

2. Let us next examine whether truth or falsehood be most conformable to the law of our nature.

Intuitively, and without reasoning at all from final causes, truth is lovely in itself, and falsehood hateful to us. These sentiments arise from the perception of moral beauty and deformity, with which God hath been graciously pleased to endow us. They are not the result of conclusions drawn from the fitness and unfitness of things, or from the good and bad consequences of speaking as we think, or the contrary. They are a branch of that general principle, by which *we are a law unto ourselves*; which principle, independent of any instructor, or any information from without, teaches us the knowledge of our duty, and, at the same time, rewards and

punishes us, according as we obey or transgress its holy admonitions.

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Hence it is, that we feel a secret satisfaction in speaking the truth, and that we disapprove of ourselves when we depart from it. In the one case, we perceive that we have done what is right; and in the other, that we have acted contrary to the light of our own mind. A liar, therefore, is ashamed of himself. He is likewise sensible, that he has incurred the disapprobation of the wise and good. He enters into their feelings, and thus beholds his own demerit in darker colours. Thus is he unhappy in his own reflections; till, by perseverance in the sin, he blunts his moral sensibility, and by long considering himself as a mean, contemptible creature, he becomes, at last, void of all sense of honour and disgrace.

Compare with him the man of truth, standing firm and erect on the unmoveable basis of his integrity. His character, great in itself, grows still greater by reflecting on its own virtuous feelings, and the approving

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sentiments

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sentiments of his brethren of mankind. Nothing can shake him from his determined purpose. The pleasures of this world spread in vain before him their bewitching enticements. The fury of contending factions, the rage of the people, the storms of persecution, wreak their violence to no purpose upon him. Like *mount Zion, which cannot be removed, he abideth* * unalterable in his resolution. He holds upwards his course, fearless and undismayed. His progress to heaven is *as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day* †; whereas, proceeding in an opposite course, the *path* of the liar is as the declining day, shading away, by imperceptible gradations, into the blackness of everlasting night.

It is, by the bye, not unworthy of observation, that, in these latter ages, a person was supposed to forfeit all the honour due to his fortune, birth, and rank, however high in these respects he might be, if he was guilty of a breach of truth. To

* Psalm cxxv. 1.

† Prov. iv. 18.

call one a liar, was thought so great an insult, as to be only expiable by mortal combat. We do not defend the excesses, and scenes of bloodshed, to which this principle gave rise: but this we may be allowed to say from the chair of peace, That it was an illustrious proof, how deep the love of veracity, and of a character founded in it, is implanted in human nature, when the most gallant and generous nations rested the *point of honour* upon truth, and considered lying, to use the language of the times, as absolutely incompatible with the manners of a christian and a gentleman.

It appears, then, that veracity is strictly conformable to our nature, and that falsifying is a violation of the law which God hath inscribed upon it. We therefore approve of the one, and disapprove of the other. And when the advantages flowing from truth, and the mischiefs caused by lying, are weighed in the balance of experience, the idea of *utility* corroborates these original sentiments of approbation and disapprobation. This idea bestows fresh

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beauty on candour and ingenuity, and aggravates the natural deformity of the opposite sin ; but is by no means the cause of the decisions we pass on the language of truth and falsehood. The reason is, that we feel the obligations to speak what is true, and to abstain from what is false, antecedent to all reasonings concerning the consequences of human action.

3. Let us examine, whether truth or falsehood will gain to us the approbation of that Being, on whose judgment our happiness is finally to depend.

As God is possessed of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, it follows as a necessary consequence, that he is a Being of infinite truth. Mankind are guilty of falsehood, from folly, weakness, malevolence, the fear of evil, and the expectations of happiness imperfectly understood. Whereas perfect wisdom can neither deceive nor be deceived, perfect goodness can have no design to hurt, and omnipotence is neither to be

be intimidated nor controlled. The sovereign cause of all things must therefore be essentially, eternally, and unchangeably true; and truth must characterize the intercourse he may be graciously pleased to carry on with his creatures.

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God is light, and with him there is no darkness. He is light and truth. Mercy and truth go before his face. He is very great; he is clothed with honour and majesty, and covereth himself with light, as with a garment. Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He revealeth the deep and secret things; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him†.*

If then God be the Lord God of truth, he must delight in those who endeavour to resemble him in that glorious attribute, and be offended with the children of guile and deceit. *He, accordingly, desireth truth in*

* Psalms, passim.

† Dan. ii. 20—22.

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the inward parts *. Inquiring into the character of the true worshipper of God, David prays, *Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell on thy holy hill?* The features first delineated of this citizen of Zion are these: *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart* †. Solomon observes, *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.* And again, *These six things doth the Lord hate, yea seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren* ‡.

The established course of Providence is not, however, interrupted, in order to bring such wicked dispositions to immediate punishment. God permits them to operate

* Psalm li. 6.

† Psalm xv. 1, 2.

‡ Prov. vi. 16—19.

and

and prevail for a short season, though they mark the character of his adversary, who *is a liar, and the father of it* *. At present, *he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust* †. Time and chance happeneth to them all ‡. In the same field, the wheat and tares grow up together; are refreshed by the same dews, and ripened by the same influences of heaven §.

But the great retributory day will arrive, when *the salvation of the righteous shall be revealed* ||; and when those who have *trea-
sured up to themselves wrath against that day*, shall receive their just recompense of indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish ¶. Then shall we appear in our real and undisguised colours, and be each of us judged, according to what is written in the books **. The sentence being passed, an everlasting separation shall take place between the righteous and the wicked. Confusion

* John, viii. 44. † Mat. v. 45. ‡ Eccles. ix. 11.

§ Math. xiii. 30. || 1 Pet. i. 5. ¶ Rom. ii. 5-9.

** Rev. xx. 12.

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shall cease, light shall rise out of darkness, and the tempest raised, at present, by contending elements, shall by their separation be for ever laid. God shall gather together in one his own children that are scattered abroad*, and put them in possession of that kingdom prepared for them, from the foundation of the world†. But he that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within his house; he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in his sight‡. The subjects of the deceiver shall be banished for ever from his presence. Sin and hell shall be cast into the unquenchable gulph. All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death§. And there shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem, any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life||.

Then shall the lip of truth be established for ever, and then shall the lying tongue

* John, ii. 52. † Mat. xxv. 34. ‡ Psalm ci. 7.
§ Rev. xxi. 8. || Rev. xxi, 27.

be put to everlasting silence and dishonour. SERM.
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I shall now conclude the discourse, with a few observations, chiefly of a practical nature.

The love of truth is natural to us. None but those entirely lost to virtue, would tell lies without some reason or other. Interest apart, and circumstances on both sides being equal, truth would be preferred to falsehood. Lying, as has been shewn, arises from these two causes: First, when we are carrying on a plan, which we cannot finish without departing from the truth: Secondly, when we have committed something we are ashamed, or are afraid, to confess.

Such being the principles from which this spiritual malady proceeds, the cure for it may be easily prescribed.

In the first case, lying is an accessory to an evil deeper laid, and would not have been adopted, had not some passion suggested, and rendered it necessary to serve an

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an end. It is evident then, that, did we allow nothing sinful a place in our heart, or an ascendancy in our councils, we would never be capable of a vice so perfectly base and dishonourable. If we would wish to avoid the guilt and shame of it, let us pursue no unlawful pleasure, court no unjust preferment, and make no sacrifices to the *mammon of unrighteousness*. Let us live a life of integrity and innocence, and we shall not be tempted, either in the framing or execution of our designs, to speak any thing contrary to the conviction of our mind.

Were the eyes of mankind open, as they ought to be, to their real interest and peace, they would clearly perceive that these cannot be promoted without a strict regard to truth and integrity; and that nothing is desirable whose price is a sacrifice of conscience. But alas! blind to their happiness, *they love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil**. And as they thus *hold the truth in unrighteousness, and do not like to retain God in their knowledge; be*

* John, iii. 19.

gives

*gives them over to a reprobate mind ; to say and to do those things which are not convenient *.*

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This dereliction of the divine grace is placed in a very beautiful and striking point of view, in the following quotation † from a work deservedly valued for its excellent instructions, moral and religious.

“ I have often thought, that God hath
“ in his great wisdom hid from men of
“ false and dishonest minds, the wonderful
“ advantages of truth and integrity, to the
“ prosperity even of our worldly affairs :
“ these men are so blinded by their covetous-
“ ness and ambition, that they cannot look
“ beyond a present advantage, nor forbear
“ to seize upon it, though by ways never
“ so indirect ; they cannot see so far as to
“ the remote consequences of a steady in-
“ tegrity, and the vast benefit and advan-
“ tages which it will bring a man at last.
“ Were but this sort of men wise and clear-
“ sighted enough to discern this, they would
“ be honest out of knavery, not out of any

* Rom. i. 28.

† Spectator, vol. v. No. 352.

“ love

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“ love to honesty and virtue, but with a
 “ crafty design to promote and advance
 “ more effectually their own interests; and
 “ therefore the justice of Divine Providence
 “ hath hid this truest point of interest from
 “ their eyes, that bad men might not be
 “ upon equal terms with the just and up-
 “ right, and serve their own wicked de-
 “ signs, by honest and lawful means.”

In the second place, if we have committed a fault, the best and most conciliatory reparation we can make for it, is to confess the truth. In most cases, a lie is a greater sin, than that which we want to conceal by means of it. It is a most dishonourable addition of iniquity to iniquity; whereas the fair acknowledgment of an error, is the test of an ingenuous mind,

It is one of the great principles of our holy religion, that without confessing our sins to God, we are not to expect his forgiveness of them. David, describing the comfort and relief which the penitent receives from this source, observes, *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity*
 5 have

have I not bid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin *. St. John, in his first Epistle, writes, *If we say, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* †. By the same means, that is, by a candid acknowledgment of our faults, we may hope to obtain pardon from the neighbour we have offended, as far as regard to the rights of mankind will authorise him to be lenient. Hence St. James admonishes us, *to confess our faults one to another, that we may be healed* ‡.

From the second general principle to which falsehood has been ascribed, children and youth are apt to learn the habit of dissimulation. When they have been guilty of something wrong, the fear of punishment makes them disguise or deny it from those to whom they are responsible for

* Psalm xxxii. 5. † 1 John, i. 8, 9. ‡ Jam. v. 16.

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their behaviour. Should they be successful in their first attempts, as they too often are, they are encouraged to repeat their faults, from the confidence that they may escape with impunity, by the same means; till, by repeated misdeeds, and lying defences of them, they become habitually false, and that too for life.

As a caution to parents, it deserves here to be remarked, that such of them as treat their children with unreasonable strictness and severity, and such as are entirely careless, paying no attention to their talk, amusements, and manners, are equally the cause of their turning out false. The behaviour of children to a harsh and brutal father, is one continued scene of deceit. Those again, who are neither afraid, nor put to any difficulty, in making their impositions pass, are guilty of the same wickedness. Solomon observes, that *he that spareth the rod, hateth his child.* The same may be asserted of the parent or teacher who useth his rod with cruelty. The golden mean is here, as in all other cases, the safest course to steer.

There

There is another, and, I apprehend, a perfectly infallible method of training up children in the falsehood of the devil, which is, to appoint them spies into the discourse and behaviour of neighbours, visitors, and chiefly of the servants of the family.

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From the two first of these causes, youth in the lower ranks of life; and from the third, those in a more opulent situation, are too often initiated into the mysteries of darkness. The last is an evil of far greater extent and magnitude than is commonly supposed. Innumerable are the instances of youth of both sexes, otherwise amiable for their dispositions, and respectable for their education and accomplishments, who are thus poisoned in their first principles of morality. The consequence is, that instead of being an ornament to their rank, they are only fit to act a part which is jealous, inquisitive, busy, meddling, and insidious. This, like some other bad taints, is observed to run in blood, and to pass downward, from parent to child, in hereditary succession,

cession, for reasons too obvious to need any illustration.

Parents, and those entrusted with the education of youth, should remember, that the most important of all instruction which a child can receive from them, is the love and practice of truth. Without this he can neither be a good member of society, nor an acceptable worshipper of God. The greatest attention ought, therefore, to be paid to his discourse, and early habits. When he confesses a fault, the chastisement for it should be mitigated, or entirely forgiven; and he should, at the same time, be told, that thus only may he hope for mercy, should he ever again do any thing forbidden. The rod, which is at best a brutal expedient, ought never to be used, till mild reproof and serious admonition have failed in producing their desirable effect; and even then should be used sparingly.

Last of all, we are bound by our profession, as Christians, to abide in the truth.

Besides

Besides other great and good ends to be served by his mission, Jesus came into the world to banish darkness and insincerity out of it, and to found a kingdom, *wherein righteousness was to dwell. Grace was poured into his lips**, and truth flowed from his tongue. *He girded his sword upon his thigh, and rode prosperously in his glory and majesty.* But it was not after the manner of kings, and with means and instruments such as they use, that he atchieved his vast designs. *In the neglected majesty of truth, and meekness, and righteousness, he went forth conquering and to conquer*†.

He made no unfair concessions, and gave no flattering promises of riches, power, and temporal prosperity, in order to increase the number of his followers. He scorned to walk in the beaten track, which leads to popularity. He paid no court to the Pharisees, the idols of their age and country. On the contrary, he unravelled the intricacies of a character, which had escaped the notice of the world, and pressed home

* Psalm xlv. 2—4.

† Rev. vi. 2.

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upon it, the severest charges of hypocrisy, falsehood, and fraud. This he did upon all proper occasions, but particularly in the temple, in presence of multitudes, accustomed to look up to them, as the oracles of truth, and the patterns of sanctity. Had he made advances, and yielded a few points to them, his fame would have been unrivalled. All men would have spoke well of him. Persecution would not have lifted up her scourge, nor the cross reared its bloody and tremendous terrors against him. But the love of truth prevailed over every temptation, and as it had been paramount in his heart during the whole of his life, so in death it did not forsake him.

When he was brought before Pontius Pilate, *he witnessed a good confession* *. He retracted nothing he had taught, or denied any thing he had done. He used no eloquence to gain a judge, who was convinced there was *no fault in him*, and who *knew that his enemies had delivered him from envy* †. When questioned concerning his

* 1 Tim. vi. 13.

† Matth. xxvii. 18.

pretensions to royalty, he replied: *My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, after the Hebrew manner of affirmation, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice**

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The converse of the proposition is no less just. *They that are not of the truth, do not bear his voice.* Candour and sincerity are the criterion of his real disciples, while cunning, craftiness, and falsehood characterise the enemies of his cross, and all those who shall have no part in the resurrection from the dead.

The following beautiful story † is recorded in the Apocryphal book of Esdras, and by

* John, xviii. 37, 38.

† Esd. iii. & iv. Joseph. Antiq. b. ii. ch. 4.

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Josephus. I should hope that no apology is necessary for inserting it in a discourse written in defence of truth.

In the first year of the reign of Darius, the son of Hyftaspes, he gave a royal entertainment to the officers of his household, to the princes and nobility of Media and Persia, *and to all the governors, and captains, and lieutenants, that were under him, from India to Ethiopia, of an hundred twenty and seven provinces.*

After the entertainment was ended, and the company had dispersed, the king retired to his bed-chamber. It happened, that on this night, sacred to mirth and festivity, three favourite officers, of the life-guards, were attendant on his person. While he slept, they projected a plan to obtain honour and preferment, singular in its nature, and unprecedented in the annals of princes. They agreed, *each of them to speak a sentence*, to seal it up, and place it under the pillow of Darius; with a view that he, *whose sentence was wiser than the others*, and who should gain the victory, might

might arrive at the following honours. He was to be clothed in purple, was to drink in a golden cup, was to ride in a chariot with bridles and harness of gold, was to wear a tiara of filk, and a chain of gold about his neck; was to sit next to Darius, because of his wisdom, and be accounted as one of the blood royal. To *the king, and the three princes of Persia*, was it referred to decide, which was the wisest of the sentences, and to whom victory should belong.

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This design was accordingly carried into execution. The first wrote, *Wine is the strongest*. The second wrote, *The king is the strongest*. The third was desirous to demonstrate that truth was the strongest; but in order to obtain a favourable hearing, he chose the favourite theme of the East, and proposed, first of all, to celebrate the praises and power of beauty. He therefore wrote, *Women are strongest; but above all things truth beareth away the victory*.

The king having *risen up*, and observed the sealed papers, convoked an assembly,

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consisting

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consisting of all the princes of Media and Persia, and the governors, and the captains, and the lieutenants, and the chief officers. He sat down in the royal seat of judgment, and the writings being read before him, the young men were called in, to declare their own sentences. They appeared in their order, and, with great eloquence, defended each the position he had advanced. Zorobabel last arose, and after singing the praises of women, in a manner that astonished the king and the princes, he proceeded thus to speak of the truth :

Great is the earth, high is the heaven, swift is the sun in his course ; for he compasseth the heavens round about, and fetcheth his course again to his own place in one day. Is he not great that maketh these things ? Therefore great is the truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon the truth, and the heaven bleisseth it : all works shake and tremble at it, and with it is no unrighteous thing. Wine is wicked, the king is wicked, women are wicked, all the children of men are wicked, and such
are

are all their wicked works, and there is no truth in them; in their unrighteousness also they shall perish. As for truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons, or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things, and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.

And with that he held his peace, and all the people then shouted, and said; Great is the truth, and mighty above all things.*

Charmed with his eloquence, the king desired him to ask some other reward, be-

* Josephus relates that Darius being sleepless, proposed to the officers upon guard, the resolution and defence of the three propositions, in the form of questions; offering, as the reward of victory, the honours above mentioned. He places this transaction in the first year of his reign; Esdras places it in the first month of the second year. Which is true, is of no consequence.

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fides those specified *in the writing*. Upon which this noble apologist for truth reminded Darius of *a vow which he had vowed* to perform, should he ever ascend the throne of the Medes and Persians. This was, to send back the Jews to their country, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, and to restore the sacred vessels, which had been taken from it at the Babylonish captivity. Darius granted his request, appointed him leader of the Jews, and gave all requisite orders to facilitate their march from the banks of the Euphrates to Palestine.

To conclude. What has been advanced in support of truth, and in exposing the guilt and deformity of falsehood, I beg leave to recommend, in the most serious and earnest manner, to the consideration of the younger part of my audience.

My young brethren, you are at present in the generous and most unpractised period of your lives, free of gloomy cares and earth-

earth-born anxieties. You are employed in treasuring up in your minds the principles of solid and useful knowledge. Yours is the spring of your days, and on the wise and virtuous improvement of that invaluable season, all your future success, and utility to yourselves, your friends, and your country, are to depend. The seeds you now sow will bring forth their proper increase, and display their different qualities, when you shall enter upon the stage of active life; if tares and thistles, the produce will only be fit to be consumed with fire; if wheat, your harvest will be joyful and plenteous.

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Sincerity is the great ornament of persons in every rank and condition of life. It is particularly amiable in those who are young, especially in such, like you, who are liberally educated. Think nobly of yourselves. Scorn to commit a sin so unsuitable to your years and line of education, and so inconsistent with your hopes of rising to places of trust in the world. In vain shall you attempt

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attempt to obtain reputation and influence, by the dint merely of literature and science. All the labours of your early years will be mispent, and all the fruits of your education be blasted, if you neglect to cultivate the love of truth. The more that you improve your intellectual powers, the more you enlarge and sharpen your understandings, the more you will be feared and hated, and the worse and more hurtful members of society you will become, if you are false.

The career of vice is usually begun with lying and dissimulation. *The wicked, says David, are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, telling lies**. One deliberate plan of falsehood, duly executed, gives such a shock to the moral principles, as seldom admits of a complete recovery. Other vices appear in youth, which time and experience correct. But if insincerity be allowed to settle in a young mind, I am afraid the case is desperate.

* Psalm lviii. 3.

This

This gathers strength from age, and becomes vigorous with talents, improved by commerce with the world. Length of days sets no bounds to its violence, and he who is a liar when young, will be a liar when his head is hoary with age.

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S E R M O N VII.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAMES, IV, 11.

*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*SERM.
VII.

THE study of human nature is one of the most excellent and useful employments of the understanding. It is excellent, because, however we may have defaced the divine image in which we are made, by our sinful inventions, we yet retain sufficient marks of our original, to render us the ornament of this lower creation: we are formed in wisdom after our kind, and are but a little lower than the angels. It is useful, because the best lessons of wisdom and virtue, and the most persuasive arguments against wickedness, are to be learned from

from real life. Example, for all the purposes of moral and religious improvement, is better than precept; and whilst speculative and abstract inquiries please the imagination, the just knowledge of men and manners interests and rectifies the heart.

Mind is, of all things, the most proper object for mind to contemplate; and, next to the character of our God, the characters of mankind are most deserving of being thoroughly investigated and known.

Our approbation is felt, when we perceive a good action. We are displeased with that which is wicked in the designs and behaviour of another. These sentiments arise spontaneous within us, independent of reasoning from the consequences of things. They spring from our nature, and are virtuous in their origin, tendency, and effects.

In order, however, to conduct ourselves with propriety under their influence, there is occasion for much prudence and Christian charity.

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charity. There are times when we ought to censure, and times when we ought to keep silence. Here, as well as in many other moral situations, there is a line of duty which it is difficult to draw, but which the good will never intentionally transgress. In most cases, it is wrong to publish the faults, and expose the character of our neighbour; and in some, it is right and expedient to express our opinions without reserve concerning them. Sins disgraceful to our nature, and injurious to the rights and peace of mankind, ought to meet with every possible discouragement that not only the laws, but that general disapprobation, can give to them. When we have received full information concerning them, when we are not biased by prejudice or ill-will, and have no bad end to serve, we may venture to decide, and to decide boldly. The praises bestowed on righteousness, and the contempt and indignation with which vice is treated, are of the most beneficial tendency. They are addressed to two very important principles of action, *the love of honour,*

honour, and the fear of shame; principles that lay powerful restraints upon wickedness, and are the sacred guardians of piety and virtue. We may safely appeal to them on every just occasion, and while we confer upon the good the applauses they deserve, let daring sinners be loaded with disgrace.

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It is however evident, upon the least attention to this subject, that it is a matter of great difficulty, to form a proper estimate of characters. The springs of human action lie deep, and are not easily traced up to their source. An action may seem culpable, and yet in reality be perfectly innocent, nay it may be praise-worthy, were the motives which gave cause to it understood. Our eye may not be clear, and that which we take to be a *mote* in the eye of our neighbour, may be an illusion, occasioned by a *beam* in our own. We may have been misinformed by persons interested to do him harm. Thus candour, impartiality, a mind open to truth, and free from the influence of the malevolent passions, together with good information, are

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all requisite to the man who presumes to fit in judgment upon another.

But alas! how few are possessed of all these virtues? How prone are we to pass rash and uncharitable sentences, and to *speak evil one of another*? How rare to be found is the person, who is possessed of that fellow-feeling and tenderness for the happiness of his neighbour, which, in judging like neighbours of his conduct, we ought all of us to cultivate? How many are at no pains to examine into the grounds on which their opinions, hastily formed and improperly delivered, are founded? And how ready are all of us to forget our own faults and imperfections, and to withhold from others that generous allowance which we would wish granted to ourselves? From which, and other causes, arises the frequency of that sin which is prohibited in the text; a sin which, however countenanced by the world, and sanctified by custom, is productive of more breaches of peace and good fellowship, of more quarrels
and

and animosities, than all other sins put together.

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What we are to understand by the precept in the text, is sufficiently obvious. Evil-speaking consists in these three particulars:

First, in ascribing to our neighbour, sinful and dishonourable deeds, which he never committed.

Secondly, in aggravating his weaknesses and sins.

Thirdly, in detracting from his merit and accomplishments.

In treating of evil-speaking, I shall first endeavour to point out the causes from whence it proceeds; and lastly, shall give some practical directions, which, accompanied with the blessing of God, may enable you to abstain from a vice so malignant in its nature, and so contrary to our profession as christians.

I. I am to endeavour to point out the causes of evil-speaking.

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There are three general causes of evil-speaking. First, the unequal light in which we view different sins, according as we are guilty or not guilty of them ourselves. Secondly, want of proper information in the causes and nature of those actions, on which our opinion of character rests. Thirdly, malice, or the positive design of doing hurt to others. These we shall consider in the order here mentioned.

I. The first cause of evil-speaking is the unequal light in which we view different sins, according as we are guilty or not guilty of them ourselves.

Human vices, like human virtues, are of a limited nature. No man is perfect in his obedience to God, and sinneth not; and I hope no instance ever existed of any person guilty of every kind of wickedness. We are a mixture of light and darkness, of wisdom and folly, of good and bad. The best go often astray from their duty, and the worst have their remains of virtue. The sins to which we have no propensity from education, from our rank in society,

or from personal constitution, we censure with asperity; those again to which we are liable, and *which easily beset us*, we are, for the most part, disposed to overlook and pardon in another.

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Here, by the bye, I would observe, that we are extremely apt to perceive things through different mediums, according as we are well or ill affected towards the person who performed them. The same individual action shall be pronounced wrong, harmless, or laudable, when done by an enemy, by one indifferent to us, or by a friend.

In no case are we more liable to fall into error, than in judging of our own habits and character. It is natural for us to think well of ourselves, and, in reviewing our lives, to consider our behaviour not so much as it is in itself, but as we would wish it to be. We deviate, besides, by slow and often by imperceptible degrees, from the path of our duty; and are often far advanced beyond the confines of sin, without being sensible that we have gone wrong.

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We harbour no jealousy of ourselves, and think we are in the right. If we do not overlook our sins altogether, which is too frequently the case, we see them in a very diminished size. Sometimes we become so blind, or so hardened by habits in wickedness, as to glory in things which redound to our shame, and confusion of face.

Now, for reasons the same in kind, though weaker in degree, we fall into mistakes in estimating characters, according as they differ from, or resemble our own. The one we condemn, and we approve of the others. To add to the errors arising from this self-deceit, we place in contrast with ourselves, persons whose vices we despise or detest. We do not institute a fair comparison, whether they or we are most to blame upon the whole. We perceive their sins in their naked deformity. We admit of no excuses for them, and make no allowance for diversity of condition and circumstances, and for the different force with which the same temptations attack different men. We do not make a fancied exchange

exchange of situation, and candidly put the question, Whether, in that event, we might not have acted in the same manner as they did? We think we would have behaved otherwise, merely because we feel no temptations to sin, *after the similitude of their transgression.*

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Thus a person of good birth, and opulent circumstances, has no temptation to steal. He values himself highly for his moral honesty, and looks down with the utmost contempt on all those, who are not of the same disposition. For this reason, he considers the lower ranks of mankind, as the vilest offenders, and language can scarce furnish him with terms sufficiently expressive of his sentiments. He never ponders the sore trials to which poverty exposes us. He has never visited the dreary cottage, where cold, and hunger, and nakedness dwell together. He never felt the severity of want, nor heard his starving children cry to him for bread, when he had none to give them.

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To him I would say; Enjoy thankfully thy happier lot: Revile not those whom misfortunes have rendered sinful: Learn a lesson of charity: Perhaps, after all thy zeal for virtue, their sins are far more venial than thy own: Pray with Agur, That thou mayest never be reduced to want, *lest, 'being poor, thou thyself, with all thy boasted honesty, shouldst be tempted to steal, and to take the name of thy God in vain.*

Listen to the account given by the poor of the great and wealthy: They are all oppressors of the poor, dissolute in their lives and principles, sabbath-breakers, adulterers, scoffers at religion, and forgetful of God. Such I would admonish, Pray likewise with Agur, *to be fed with food convenient for you, and not for riches, lest you be full, and deny God, and say, who is the Lord?*

This person embraces implicitly the creed, and conforms strictly with the holy observances of former times. That one hath ventured to depart from common received

ceived opinions, and to explore new regions of thought and speculation. The former is called a hypocrite by the latter, and he in his turn is accused by him of heresy or infidelity. The gay and pleasurable censure sobriety; "'Tis all monkish abstinence," they exclaim, "and unnatural mortification." The sober and frugal retort upon them the opprobrious names of gluttons, drunkards, debauchees. The miser abhors the prodigal; and the prodigal, happy in his folly and excesses, execrates the miser.

Thus are the seeds of evil-speaking sown betwixt man and man. Candour and charitable construction have no part in forming the decisions they utter against one another. Each casts his own failings behind his back, or views them diminished by self-love almost to nothing; whilst with the inverted tube he beholds those of his neighbour magnified and distorted.

2. Others are guilty of evil-speaking from rash and premature judgment, and

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from their not being thoroughly acquainted with the action, or the character, concerning which they give their opinion.

To account justly for the behaviour of another, and to delineate from it the distinguishing features of his character, is a nice and difficult undertaking, in which, for the following reasons, very few succeed.

First, The bulk of mankind judge of the conduct of others, not according to truth, but by the partial and imperfect standard of their own sentiments and notion of things. Hence their opinions regarding any particular action, are as different and opposite as their tempers. The merciful and noble-minded are desirous to ascribe it to a good motive. The wicked, being destitute of generous and sympathizing sentiments, and eager to asperse virtue and piety, resolve it into selfishness and bad design. Each supposes, that the agent must have been influenced by some such motives as he is conscious would have influenced himself in his situation, and decides accordingly.

Secondly,

Secondly, It is seldom in our power to obtain full information of every cause and motive that may have determined a man to act in this or that particular manner. He may have been influenced by reasons which have totally escaped our notice. That which he hath done, although it may seem ambiguous, and even bad, may be innocent, and would appear such to us, were we acquainted with every cause, connection, and consequence of it. Granting however that it should be wrong, yet it may not be sinful in that high degree we suppose it. Besides, there may be alleviating circumstances in the case. The temptation by which he fell, might have been uncommonly strong: he might have been surprised in an unguarded moment: he might have sinned, not from premeditated design, but from an unfortunate sally of passion, of which he now bitterly repents. In short, charity, *which thinketh no evil*, may suggest many kind and brotherly apologies for him.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, We are often guilty of evil-speaking, in consequence of misinformation, and believing too easily the reports that are propagated to the hurt of our neighbour.

Here it is a duty incumbent upon us, to be strictly on our guard, against being imposed upon. Instead of forming a hasty, precipitate judgment, we should carefully consider, and if it be in our power, should inquire, whether the tale we have heard be a just account of what is said to have happened. One circumstance added to the truth, or one withheld from it, will make a good action seem bad, and that which is bad look worse. The malicious are restless and indefatigable, like their father the *devil*, and are constantly *walking about, seeking whom they may devour*. The story may have been contrived or altered by them, and, in either case, we ought not to believe one syllable of it. It is no argument against this, that others tell it as well as they; for, first, the simple and unsuspicious are easily misled; and, in the next place, there are many,

many, who would not raise an evil report, that are very ready to take up and circulate one that is made to their hand. Neither is it conclusive, that, because it is current, and passes in the world for truth, it must be true; for as long as there are idle, curious, inquisitive, credulous people to be met with, as long will scandal prevail, and malicious tales be told. That it is plausible, and has the appearance of veracity, can be easily explained on the supposition that it was at first a groundless, and even an absurd fiction. When a thing of this kind has been frequently repeated, what was improbable in it is gradually left out, deficiencies are supplied, and circumstances are added, till it acquire the form and consistency of truth. In this way reports of the most censorious nature prevail in the world, that are either void of all foundation, or are aggravated in a very false and cruel manner.

A good name being one of our best and dearest possessions, it is surely sinful and
unfeeling

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unfeeling in a high degree, thus to sport and trifle with the character of others. If we will take it upon us to judge, it becomes us to listen with reserve to the accusations brought against them. Let us make large allowance to the exaggerations which hatred, envy, prejudice, rivalry, jealousy, party-spirit, bigotry, and the like, may have added to the charge; and let us be disposed to call in question, rather than to admit as evidence, things manifestly told to do harm. No excuse can here be pled for rash, ill-founded judgments; they are unjust and inhuman; no person would wish to be so judged himself.

3. The last and main cause of evil-speaking is malice. This consists in the deliberate intention of doing hurt to another, and is opposed to that temper, which our Saviour appointed to be the badge of his followers, in these words: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another**.

* John, xiii. 35.

The protection which the excellency of SERM.
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our free constitution affords to us, in our persons and properties, is more secure and complete, than what, perhaps, was ever enjoyed by any nation. Provision is so amply made for detecting and punishing fraud, theft, robbery, violence, murder, and other atrocious crimes, that foreigners urge the frequency of our executions as an objection to our national morals; whereas the fact seems to be, that the subjects of neighbouring states are no less, if not much more, corrupt and licentious than our own, but do not possess our political advantages of bringing offenders to justice. However this be, it is evident that when malice is restrained from exerting itself in deeds of injustice and violence, it will study to discharge its venom by attacking the reputation of those whom it desires to injure.

Now, this may be done two ways: first, by publishing defamatory libels; secondly, by evil-speaking.

The former of these is attended with much trouble and expence, and exposes their
author,

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author, or their editor, to penalties provided by the legislature against offences, capable, like these, of being defined and proved. It is, therefore, an evil limited, in a great measure, to the circle in which rival wits, rival statesmen, and those who hold public offices, move; and by no means affects the bulk of mankind. The poison besides, which it is meant to communicate, carries with it an antidote of sovereign efficacy in most cases, if not in all; which is, that the wise and good pay no regard to such scandalous publications, and that time either brings to light truths purposely concealed and vitiated, or soon buries their falsehoods in everlasting oblivion.

But evil-speaking extends its malignant influence throughout the wide sphere which embraces the whole members of society. No rank, profession, age, or sex, is beyond its reach. *It walketh in darkness like the pestilence, and wasteth like destruction at noon-day.* It assumes so many shapes, changes so easily, and varies so infinitely its appearances, that the best of statutes have

have in vain attempted to weave a net to entangle and catch so multiform a prodigy of mischief. A few cases, indeed, of gross scandal and defamation, with suitable penalties annexed to them, are described in our code of criminal jurisprudence. But in general, the evil is absolutely irremediable by law; it being easy to elude the grasp of justice, and, at the same time, to gratify every malicious purpose of our heart, in the most safe and complete manner. It is easy to throw out dark hints and suspicions, to use equivocal and ambiguous terms, and to convey the most severe reflections in language, which no law ever framed can interpret into a crime. In short, it is chiefly by means of this sin, by whatever name we choose to call it, whether by *calumny*, *detraction*, *whispering*, *tale-bearing*, *back-biting*, *judging another*, *censoriousness*, or, which includes them all, by *evil-speaking*, that those, enflamed with enmity and the thirst of doing hurt, are to be dreaded in a community like ours, so well guarded in other respects by our laws and institutions.

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In former ages, our rude forefathers referred the decision of many causes, both civil and criminal, to the prowess and valour of the parties who went to law. This brutish appeal from the tribunal of reason to the fate of arms, was owing to their want of laws and precedents, and to their ignorance how to settle the various and complicated claims of justice. Whether the remains of *the judicial combat*, still observable in the customs of the European nations, are not connived at from something of a similar cause to that which at first gave rise to it, this is not the proper place to investigate.

The cognizance, then, of evil-speaking, the source of so much misery and calamity for which no redress can be obtained at the bar, belongs in a peculiar manner to the pulpit. The sacred moralists of the Old Testament dispensation have described this sin, with great force and beauty, as a thing most offensive to God. Jesus and his apostles, as will be shewn in the sequel, laid down rules against it, so clear and decisive,

decisive, that none guilty of it have any title to be numbered among his disciples. Thus religion comes happily in aid of the weakness and imperfection of human institutions, and, by disclosing to us the mysteries of the world beyond the grave, points to a day, when the secrets of wickedness will be fully revealed, and will receive that recompense they have escaped here, and thus warns us to fly from the wrath which is to come.

SERMON VIII.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAMES, IV. 11.

*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*SERM.
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OF the three causes which we have assigned for evil-speaking, malice, it has been observed, is the chief. Now malice, although it has only one end to pursue, in the case under our consideration, yet takes methods to gain that end, as different as are the passions, humours, and degree of sagacity in those who admit it into their councils. In a subject of such importance, it is proper to be more particular. I, therefore, proceed to take under review the more distinguishable kinds of character, that speak evil of their neighbours

bours from the exprefs desire of doing them hurt.

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I. The one, who deserves to be placed in the head of this black catalogue, is the man whose enmity is not restricted to individuals, but extends to the whole of his kind.

He is a person whose temper has been soured with crosses and disappointments; or who, by long indulging a spirit of perverseness, dissatisfaction, and ill-nature, has planted it so deep, and fixed it so firmly in his mind, that all which he utters is gall and wormwood. He is fretful, rude, and surly. He is offended with every countenance, on which joy and complacency smile, and he is cut to the quick by the prosperity of his neighbour. Merit, useful talents, and amiable dispositions of mind, are no protection from the virulence of his abuse, should the person adorned by them be fortunate. If he is pleased with any thing, it is with the contemplation of wretchedness and misery; for, being wretch-

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ed and miserable himself, he is grieved that any should be successful and happy.

It is painful to hear the scurrility uttered by his tongue. His jaundiced eye sees every action and character in the worst light, and he curses and rails against them, according to the impression thus made upon his mind. He unmercifully aggravates the weaknesses, follies, and vices of others. He extenuates their virtues, or ascribes them to bad motives, or calls them by the sin to which, in their excess or defect, they may approach. Innocence, according to him, is silliness; wisdom is cunning; courage, rashness; prudence, knavery; and piety, hypocrisy. His memory is a precious repository of the errors, failings, and faults of his neighbours, and of all the bad constructions that he can possibly put upon their behaviour. He judges others by the standard of his own feelings, and supposes that they act from every base principle, which he is conscious would have influenced himself, had he been placed in their room. His abuse and aspersions unfold his own
cha-

character, and expose it in all its naked deformity to the notice and execration of mankind.

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It would be concluded that one of this virulent disposition and malignant conduct would do incredible mischief in society. He *casteth fire-brands and arrows** at random, and on all hands around him, and we might conclude that destructive conflagrations and wounds would be occasioned by them. This, however, is so far from being the consequence, that while he is thus busied in discharging such dangerous weapons, he may say with the *mad-man* of Solomon, *Am not I in sport?* Of all the characters addicted to evil-speaking, he is perhaps the least noxious. He takes in so large a field, that the overflowing of his gall does little or no harm. His temper is so violent, his abuse so general, and his tongue so loud and outrageous, that, like the rattle-snake, he gives the alarm, and all who hear it are on their guard against what he says. His stories and commentaries do not

* Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.

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even hurt at second hand, for they carry on their forehead the stamp and signature of their original. What is more mortifying to him, they are consigned to oblivion, without the last decent ceremony of a regular confutation.

2. Without that asperity of temper, foulness of tongue, and brutality of manners, by which this evil-speaker is distinguished, the satirical wit steps forward, and claims our attention.

He is one whose spirits are lively, his conversation animated, his repartees quick, his sallies poignant. His discourse, of which life and manners form the main topics, is strongly marked with a severe and sarcastic way of accounting for actions, and explaining characters. He is a stranger to that enchanting humour, which can so attemper ridicule, as even to give no pain to the person on whom it is directed. His delight, on the contrary, is placed in mortifying and depressing others, and, when he seemeth to be in sport, he is throwing darts, fire-brands, and arrows, to do harm.

There

There is, however, a certain originality of design, and disposition of colouring, in his portraits, which pleases. The resemblance in each piece is discernible, although, in the general composition of it, truth had small part. Some of the limbs or features are enlarged, others are diminished, and others distorted; beauties are thrown into the shade, and blemishes are brought in view and aggravated; so that, retaining a certain likeness, the fairest of characters may be represented by his transforming pencil, in the most ugly and ridiculous form. The reception he meets with in company, and the malicious pleasure enjoyed by them in seeing characters thus exposed, tempts him to exercise his vein. The evil grows upon him, till at last it extinguishes all his regards for veracity, honour, and humanity; and friend and foe, the innocent and guilty, suffer equally from the keenness of his satire, as often as an opportunity of indulging it comes in his way.

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Although it is true that this species of wit, especially when indulged too often and

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too freely, is equally neglected with the sarcastic invectives of the character formerly described, yet a person who values himself upon it is always an unsafe companion, and a dangerous friend. In the hours sacred to friendship, and when conviviality and unsuspecting confidence unlock our heart, and discover not only its secrets, but all our wanderings and imperfections, he is busy collecting materials of evil. To-day he seems kind and affectionate, to-morrow he may be false and treacherous; for he is extremely susceptible of malicious impressions, is violent in his animosity, and implacable in his nature. Besides, to maintain his superiority in the empire of wit, he will sacrifice every other consideration. Therefore, however entertaining his company may be, let no such man be trusted. Let your acquaintance be distant with him. In conversing with him let reserve dwell on your lips, and secrecy guard your tongue. In the number of your select and bosom friends let him not be reckoned.

3. The character next to be considered, I would distinguish by the name of the *suspicious*. SERM.
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A suspicious temper, one of the most unhappy with which a man can be tormented, makes him judge others not according to truth, but as they are represented to him, by the false intelligence he receives from his distrust, fears, and jealousies. He is haunted with the apprehension that snares, plots, and dishonours are meditating against him, by all with whom he is connected, or has any business to transact. He puts the most unfavourable constructions upon all which is said or done to him. A look, a whisper will alarm him; silence itself he suspects; and, under the courtesy of strangers, and the kindness of friends, he is afraid that treachery is concealed.

In order to support the strange and odd accounts he gives of the behaviour of others, he is obliged to exert all the powers of his invention and eloquence. Hence, in this character we often find much plausibility

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and quickness of parts. But it is the plausibility of a Belial, formerly taken notice of, by which his candour and humanity are wrecked to make his allegations be believed. He is a severe parent, a jealous husband, a hard master, a troublesome neighbour, and an uncertain friend. He has no good disposition of a steady nature; his distrust is constantly on the look-out; and his enmity is mortal. In miniature and private life, he displays the same spirit, that, in more exalted stations, fills the world with bloodshed and violence. When restrained by law from breaking forth into such dreadful excesses, this temper vents its wrath in the murder of good names and innocent characters.

4. The next I shall take under review, is a far more dangerous and hurtful character than any of those already considered. I know not any single name, by which to convey a proper idea of it; but the features are strongly marked, and may be drawn with accuracy. For sake of perspicuity, I shall call it the *hypocritical*, the great and
compre-

comprehensive class of sinners which it most resembles, and to which it chiefly belongs.

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In persons of this kind there is an union of malice, with cunning, cowardice, and the love of popularity. They are afraid of speaking as they think, and of exposing to the world the rancour and malignity of their heart. The penalties, such as they are, of law; the resentment of individuals; and, above all, the reputation for sanctity, which they wish to maintain; oblige them to adopt a plan of delivering their sentiments, by which they may at once gratify their ill-nature, screen themselves from detection, and even appear charitable and inoffensive.

For the accomplishment of these ends, they are cautious and reserved, often specious, and always artful in whatever they speak concerning their neighbour. *Their words, softer than oil, yet sharp as the razor set with it,* impose completely on the multitude, and are heard with applause. Their talk is designedly dark, perplexed,
and

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and of ambiguous interpretation. It abounds in mysterious hints, oblique insinuations, and half-expressed censure. A well-timed shrug, this artful calumniator knows, can give a stab as deep as the most open avowed slander can inflict. As the penetrating and royal moralist remarks of him; *He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet, he teacheth with his fingers: frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth discord* *. He is master of a thousand low artifices in his mode of speaking, which never occur to an honest mind; and by which he is so guarded, that, should he be challenged for any thing said, he has secret meanings in reserve, salvos and transpositions of words at command, and an amazing facility of telling lies, that usually bring him off safe, if not victorious.

Besides all this, he lies in wait for seasons and opportunities to strike a sure blow, and, at the same time, to escape, like the midnight assassin, unobserved. Or, to vary the figure, he avoids making any open

* Prov. vi. 13, 14. assault,

assault, and carries on his approaches in so secret a manner, that his mine is sprung before those who suffer by it have any apprehensions of the advance of an enemy, or can discover afterward by whom the insidious explosion was caused.

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Were one to define this species of evil-speaking, I would say of it, That the language, in which it is told, conveys much more malice than what it expresses, and leaves more strong and lasting impressions of the guilt of those who are defamed by it, than the words import.

Let us listen for a little to the discourse of those addicted to it. With a gloomy, downcast countenance, with a sorrowful tone of voice, and with much seeming reluctance, they inform us, "That they
"are extremely grieved such a friend or
"neighbour has behaved so unlike himself; — that they can't be so uncharitable
"as to believe the story as it is told; — hope
"it is not quite so bad; — are afraid some
"evil-disposed person has made it worse; —
"suspect, however, that some part of it
"is

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“ is too, too true ; — and that, providing
 “ no bad use is to be made of what they
 “ say, they will repeat simply what is re-
 “ ported to have happened.” Then with
 many qualifying *ifs*, and pretended apolo-
 gies purposely introduced to make the mat-
 ter worse, with many injunctions to secrecy,
 which they hope will never be observed,
 they tell in their own Pharisaic style, the
 very worst edition of the story which they
 have picked up or invented. To complete
 the farce, there follows a sad and pitiful la-
 mentation over *the poor unlucky man*, as
 they call him ; which one never hears ut-
 tered without recollecting the descriptions
 which have been given of the crocodile,
 shedding tears over the prey which it has
 murdered.

Like that devouring monster, let all such
 insidious and cruel hypocrites be dreaded.
*Their words, as David justly remarks, are
 smoother than butter, but war is in their
 heart ; their words are softer than oil, yet
 are they drawn swords. Their tongues de-
 vise mischief, like a sharp razor, working
 deceit-*

deceitfully. They love evil more than good, and lying rather than to speak righteousness. They love all-devouring words. God shall likewise destroy them for ever, he shall take them away, and pluck them out of their dwelling-place, and root them out of the land of the living.

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5. The *whisperer*, having a resemblance, in some particulars, to the character last described, naturally merits our consideration next in order.

Under pretence of reposing the utmost confidence in our honour, and under promises extorted from us, of the deepest secrecy, he communicates to us his calumnious suspicions, and tales of slander. He has heard such and such reports in private, and would not for all the world have them divulged. For fear of being overheard, he *whispers* them into our ear, repeating again and again his injunctions to keep the whole a profound secret. We believe him, and are faithful to his trust, but are soon surprised to find that the next person

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person we converse with, and a hundred more, have been told, by the same man, the same defamatory things.

This base character was regarded by Solomon, as having something in it at enmity with those who lived together on the footing of friendship. *A whisperer, says he, separateth chief friends**. *He that covereth a transgression, seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends†*.

The Son of Sirach considers whispering as a sin allied to theft. *Be not called a whisperer, and lie not in wait with thy tongue; for a foul shame is upon the thief, and an evil condemnation upon the double tongue ||*. Whisperers hold a place in the black catalogue of sinners enumerated by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans ‡.

6. Brother in iniquity to the *whisperer*, and congenial with him in guile and subtilty, the *tale-bearer* is seen running about from

* Prov. xvi. 28. † Eccles. v. 14. || Eccles. xxi. 28.

‡ Rom. i. 29.

house to house, from company to company, gathering materials together wherewith to sow dissension among neighbours, and put friends at variance one with another. To arrive at the secrets of families, he is forced to study the arts of flattery, to wear the mask of friendship, and to speak with a smooth insinuating tongue. This infamous character is further composed of inquisitiveness, guile, breach of trust, the love of fomenting quarrels and spreading discord.

Moses considered the sin of tale-bearing as so hurtful to society, that he prohibited it by an express statute: *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people* *. Solomon places it in contrast with fidelity and secrecy. *A tale-bearer, says he, revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter* †. *He that goeth about as a tale-bearer, revealeth secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips* ‡.

* Lev. xix. 16. † Prov. xi. 13. ‡ Prov. xx. 19.

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He further observes, *Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth**. The figure is elegant, and full of expression. A coldness, perhaps, or some trifling difference, has taken place betwixt two neighbours. The tale-bearer avails himself of the trust, which they mutually repose in him, to inflame it into a quarrel. They both look upon him as a friend, and speak freely in his presence. He listens to the account which each of them apart gives of the matter, enters seemingly into their resentments, *flattereth with his lips*, throws out insinuations to feed the flame, and then carries their unguarded words from the one to the other, till he makes them irreconcilable enemies. If, however, they should not thus confide in him, his next expedient is to forge speeches and pass them in their name, which, if he is not detected, never fails to complete the purposes of his malice. *As coals are to burning coals, and wood to*

* Prov. xxvi. 20.

fire;

fixe: so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly*.

The busy-body of St. Paul is much the same character with the tale-bearer of Solomon. The Apostle ascribes to idleness the vices which predominate in it; a copious source, indeed, of many kinds of wickedness. To the Thessalonians he thus writes; *When we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat: For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy-bodies†. The cure he accordingly prescribes is this; Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. And in his first Epistle to Timothy, speaking of certain widows whom he severely condemns, he uses these words: And whilst they learn to be idle, wandering*

* Prov. vi. 21, 22.

† 2 Thes. iii. 10—12.

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but tattlers also, and busy-bodies, speaking
things which they ought not*.*

7. The *talkative*, in as far as they are propagators of scandalous aspersions, fall under the description of evil-speakers. Yet, in justice, it deserves to be remarked, that, for the most part, they talk for talking sake, rather than from ill-will; which is to be inferred from this, that they are as prone to divulge their own secrets, as those of their neighbour, and, rather than hold their tongue, will tell things even to their own shame and disadvantage. From imbecility of mind, from an aversion at silence, and the insatiate desire of entertaining others with their discourse, they disqualify themselves from being proper judges of what ought to be spoken, and what not.

But although we have made this concession in their favour, we must, at the same time, observe, that they are a very disagreeable and hurtful kind of people. Their

* 1 Tim. v. 13.

ruling passion gives them a curious, inquisitive, meddling, busy turn of mind. Dishonourable and perfidious, they are eager to spread and communicate what they were eager to learn. Like the ancient Athenians, *they spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing* *. Had they a hundred ears, they would listen with all of them to calumny and defamation; and had they a hundred tongues, they would proclaim with them to the four quarters of the earth, every bad rumour they could catch, and every secret entrusted to their keeping. It is not only wrong, but dangerous, to trifle thus with the reputation and affairs of our neighbours. From the habit of retailing the evil spoken by others, they learn to speak it themselves. Hence it is found, that those who are extremely talkative in their youth, become evil-speakers as they advance in years, and that officious curiosity, long indulged, degenerates into downright malice.

* Acts, xvii. 21.

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Wise men, says Solomon, *lay up knowledge*; but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin; but he that refraineth his lips, is wise*. The Son of Sirach, in praise of silence, observes, *There is one that keepeth silence, and is found wise; and another, by much babbling, becometh hateful. A wise man will hold his tongue, till he see opportunity: but a babbler and a fool will regard no time. He that useth many words, shall be abhorred; and he that taketh to himself authority therein, shall be hated*†.

There is a sin, which, though not included in the definition which has been given of evil-speaking, is yet so near a kin to it as to deserve being taken notice of in the close of this catalogue. This consists in publishing abroad the faults, imperfections, and failings of others.

Our disapprobation of crimes, or shameful deeds, and of such as act in contempt

* Prov. x. 14. 19.

† Eccles. xx. 5. 7. 8.

of the great principles of morality and religion, ought to be expressed with all freedom and boldness of speech. But surely it is cruel to be officious in pointing out the specks and blemishes, which we may perceive in the eye of a brother. It is no just apology for this, that we are speaking nothing but truth. When speaking such truth is hurtful, and keeping silence does no harm, a sincere christian, however holy and fervent his zeal may be, will never hesitate how to act. With averted face he will drop a covering over the weaknesses of another, instead of exposing them naked to a malicious world. Even in the case when we received personal injuries, our Saviour admonished us, *to go and tell our brother his fault, between him and us alone* *. Much more, then, are we, as his followers, to abstain from exposing his faults and errors, in those matters wherein we have no sort of concern.

* Mat. xviii. 15.

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As reputation and the abilities of mind are the objects, on which evil-speaking discharges its malignity, it is evident that those who prostitute their talents, in ridiculing peculiarities in the person, the features, the voice, the gait, and external carriage of another, do not belong to that class of sinners we have been considering. Jesters, buffoons, mimics, and the like, as well as evil-speakers, may be the cause of much uneasiness to others, because no person chuses to have his defects and misfortunes made the laughing-stock of a company. Characters, however, of this kind, are far below the notice of the pulpit; and the perfect contempt, in which they are held by the wise and virtuous, may well serve as an atonement, and appease the resentments of those who have been injured by their folly, levity, and ill-will.

Such appear to be the general causes of evil-speaking. Sometimes it ariseth from partial conceptions of right and wrong, sometimes

sometimes from temerity of judgment, but for the most part, from malice. In every instance and display of it, there is wickedness; it being sinful to judge another by rules not founded in truth, to condemn him without a full and impartial examination into his behaviour, and to raise or propagate reports to his hurt.

The distinctive features of evil-speaking, then, are *falsehood, injustice, and cruelty*. For whether we detract from his merit, or add to his guilt, or lay to his charge sins which he never committed, we depart from the truth. And as a good name, next to a good conscience, is the most valuable property a man can possess, so to deprive him of it is both unjust and inhumane, as will be afterwards more particularly shewn.

When one seriously reflects on the nature and malignity of the sin of evil-speaking, is it not matter of astonishment, that it should be so very prevalent, and, at the same time, so well received in the world? Forgetful of their several faults and transgressions,

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gressions, and how liable they all are to be injured by it themselves, they do not discourage it as they ought. On the contrary, they hearken to it with avidity, and think the ordinary run of conversation dull and insipid, without a seasoning of scandal. But this, like other favourite sins, is destructive of their peace; for it is the bane of love, affection, friendship, and good neighbourhood, besides being the cause of numberless quarrels. No man of spirit will suffer his character to be insulted with impunity: his resentment, honour, and interest, are all concerned to vindicate it: they who have spoken evil of him, have proclaimed hostilities: reprisals are made upon them by the same weapons; and thus a foundation is laid for endless strife and contention.

On this account St. James thus expresses himself concerning the tongue:

If any man offend not in words, the same is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about

about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell*.

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This wisdom, he afterwards subjoins, the wisdom, to wit, of evil-speaking, descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

In contrast with which he places the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace†.

* Jam. iii. 2—6. † Jam. iii. 15—18.

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In order, then, that we may be enabled to avoid the wisdom that is *earthly, sensual, devilish*, and to arrive at the knowledge of *the wisdom that is from above*, it now remains, that we make the moral and practical improvement of this subject, in the following discourse.

S E R M O N IX.

On Evil-Speaking.

JAM. IV. 11.

Speak not evil one of another, brethren.

HAVING thus endeavoured to ascertain S E R M.
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the causes, and to point out the symptoms of this spiritual distemper, let us proceed, in conformity with the plan of discourse, to prescribe the remedies proper for it.

The first and most obvious of these is, that which is appointed by our Saviour, and, were it duly observed, would for the most part prove a radical cure. His words are: *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother; Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou*

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thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.*

By the beam in our own eye, we are to understand every passion, prejudice, opinion, or sentiment, which may predispose us to think unkindly of our neighbour. These encompass the heart with so false a medium, and corrupt so much the organs of our intellectual vision, that we see things not as they are in themselves, but according to their malignant representation. Under such influence, is it possible for any one to speak the language of truth, far less of that charity which *thinketh no evil*? For, as Jesus in connection with the passage above quoted goes on to reason, *a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his fruit; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble-bush gather they grapes. A good man,*

* Luke, vi. 41, 42.

out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*.

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Here then, if we are in earnest, the labour is to commence. We must search into our hearts, and boldly extirpate from them the first principles of the disease; such as *Pride*, which, by raising us high in our own conceit, lessens the rest of mankind, and renders us indifferent to their happiness or their misery;—*Envy*, pale at the merit and prosperity of another;—*Party-rage*, cruel without feeling remorse for it;—*Rivalship*, that cannot bear a fellow;—*Bigotry*, without eyes, ears, or understanding;—and *Malice*, in all its various forms open or disguised. Of these and every other bad disposition we must divest ourselves, otherwise our judgment must be repugnant to veracity and mercy.

But further, it will greatly conduce to promote the desirable end we are pursuing;

* Luke, vi. 43—45.

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in which candour and fellow-feeling ought to place them. Consider in what manner we behave to those who are dear to us. We delight in displaying what is amiable and accomplished in them, we apologise for their faults, we cast a kindly veil over their errors and weaknesses. Let us extend the plan; it is a noble and a generous one. Mankind are all our brethren; their origin, nature, and feelings, are the same with our own; and they have the same grounds to expect good usage from us, that we have and do expect it from them.

Love and respect merit, wherever it is to be found. Study to acquire the delightful habit of discovering what is great and beautiful in the sentiments and conduct of others, and leave to the children of the *accuser*, the ungracious task of detecting, and being pleased with their follies and vices. In lifting up your eyes to superior worth, let no envious passion interpose a cloud to obscure those talents and graces which you are incapable of rivaling. Grieve not at
the

the prosperity of your neighbours. If God has been good to them, why should your eye be evil, and your spirit be moved to disturb their tranquillity? Follow a different course. Rise above the gross and selfish world. Learn to sympathise with the happy as well as with the unfortunate, *to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep**.

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Never diminish the applauses due to excellence; extenuate nothing that is praiseworthy; do not set any thing down through malice. If you will not keep silence, speak of men as they are, and of events as they happened. Actions harmless, and free of ill design, may at least claim an entire exemption from censure. The life of man is not employed in pursuits of so important and unremitting a nature, as to leave no vacant and relaxed hours in it.

Beware of aggravating what is positively wrong in the behaviour of another. Let virtuous indignation produce the proper

* Rom. xii. 15.

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effects,

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effects, which that sentiment was implanted within you to serve. Let it keep you from being led astray by the deceitfulness of sin. Let it animate you to bring to deserved shame and disgrace those persons by whom the dignity of your nature, the welfare of society, and the interest of religion, have been injured. In small offences, in matters of imprudence, and where a man has fallen by a strong and unforeseen temptation, as there is less harm and less guilt in them, so it is best to be silent. A zeal which exceeds this, and which kindles on every slight occasion, is intemperate and anti-christian.

2. Having thus first of all taken *the beam out of our own eye*, and purified the seat of judgment, it will be essentially necessary, that we examine with diligence and impartiality those actions, on which we are to form our estimates of character. Common fame, and the opinion of others, are by no means a just criterion of merit or demerit. Hatred, envy, and wrath, on the one hand; and affection, love, party-zeal, and the like, on the other; are inexhaustible sources of

erroneous, and corrupt decisions. Besides, SERM.
IX. by the spirit of accommodation and the profound arts of hypocrisy, the worst of sinners have been popular; whereas, by inflexible adherence to principle and integrity, how often have the virtuous been hated and aspersed? And hence let a man act never so consistently, he shall yet be described under two or more characters, according as we happen to converse with people well or ill affected towards him.

We owe it, therefore, to truth, and to the sacred rights of mankind, to beware of being prejudiced against another, on the vague reports that are circulated to his disadvantage. In some cases, we run small risk of being imposed upon. When we hear one in the outrage of passion railing, cursing, and flinging stones, like wicked Shimei, complaining of wrongs he never received, and of evils the dream of his dis-tempered brain, we pay no regard to what he says. But to a tale told with calmness and plausibility, especially if communicated to us in secrecy and friendship, we are too

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ready to give implicit credit. We suspect no bad design, and are caught in the snare. Perhaps we are bound to secrecy, and if we are faithful to the trust reposed in us, we are absolutely precluded from getting at the knowledge of the truth. Thus many persons of the most inoffensive nature are daily misled and perverted, by the vile tale-bearer, the cunning whisperer, the hollow hypocrite, and the like insidious calumniators.

O my friends, let us beware of these children of the devil. The plain and undisguised manner, in which the righteous express their indignation against infamous persons and infamous deeds, carries no danger in it to the good of society, or the cause of mercy. It is the manly, the noble, the ingenuous disapprobation of hurtful vice. Be not afraid to listen to those who utter it. They are the friends of virtue, and the open enemies of that which degrades us to the condition of fallen and malicious spirits.

But when calumnies and slanders are whispered into your ear, when the secrets of families

families are disclosed by cunning spies and false dependents, when doubtful surmises are thrown out, and apologies are made for others with the express design to blacken them; then it is incumbent on you to hear, if you must hear, with the utmost distrust. Be suspicious of the truth of every thing said to you, and if you do err, you err on the side of charity. And upon the whole, in all matters relative to the behaviour and good name of your neighbour, make it a rule to think and judge for yourselves. Learn to hear with your own ears, to see with your own eyes, and never to condemn without convincing reasons, and well-authenticated facts, on which to ground your sentence. If you are not in a situation to obtain proper intelligence, listen with reserve, and suspend your determination till you shall be able to get it.

It would much contribute to the discouragement of evil-speaking, were the company of those addicted to it generally shunned. This simple remedy is within

our reach; but mankind follow a different course. They take pleasure in scandal, and no one is the worse received by them whose discourse abounds with harsh and sarcastic remarks on the absent. Much does it pain me to observe, that many of that sex, whose milder nature and softer occupations, and whose more unprotected condition should render them averse to say or to hear any thing cruel and unkind, are yet of all others most propense to indulge in this sin. From all which causes it arises, that numbers who have too much goodness to be the authors of lying calumnies themselves, become yet the unlucky instruments of publishing them to the world.

3. To these considerations I add, in the next place, that the heinousness of evil-speaking, a detestable compound of falsehood and cruelty, ought to determine every person who has a love for truth and humanity, to avoid it.

Next to a good conscience, what is so precious as a good name? *The merchandise*
of

*of it is better than the merchandise of silver,
and the gain thereof than fine gold*.*

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Many have nothing else to depend upon than this treasure, for all their success and prosperity in the world, and to deprive them of it, is robbing them of their all. Others, to gain it, have fought up against many difficulties and sore temptations; and though they may have attained to independency, may yet be much injured in their affairs by slander and detraction.

The gentleness and delicacy of the female character, like the skin of the ermine, is easily stained, and never again recovers its native purity and whiteness. Certain professions, and those too of the most respectable order, are exposed to the same evil; their reputation is easily wounded, and is scarcely afterwards ever to be healed. Upon the whole, so vast and comprehensive is the range of this pestilence, that few, if any, of the children of men pass their lives without suffering by it.

* Prov. iii. 14.

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The son of Sirach, the first of un-inspired moralists, describes with his original pen, evil-speaking as the offspring and emanation of cruelty, in these warm and animated words:

Curse the whisperer and double-tongued; for such have destroyed many that were at peace. A backbiting tongue hath disquieted many, and driven them from nation to nation; strong cities hath it pulled down, and overthrown the houses of great men. A backbiting tongue hath cast out virtuous women, and deprived them of their labour. Whoso hearkeneth unto it, shall never find rest, and never dwell quietly. The stroke of the whip maketh marks in the flesh; but the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones. Many have fallen by the edge of the sword; but not so many as have fallen by the tongue. Well is he that is defended from it, and hath not passed through the venom thereof; who hath not drawn the yoke thereof, nor hath been bound in her bands. For the yoke thereof is a yoke of iron, and the bands thereof are bands of brass.

brafs. The death thereof is an evil death, the grave were better than it.*

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On comparing this account of evil-speaking with the general practice of the world, one is struck with the wonderful inconsistencies that appear in human nature. Lying we despise, and cruelty we abhor, and yet we are much less shocked than we ought to be, with their union in one and the same character; as if, like the mixture of certain natural poisons, that union was to destroy their noxious qualities. To hurt the property, or to cut and mangle the body of another, is what the worst of criminals do not perpetrate without some pangs of remorse. Yet how freely do many addict themselves to evil-speaking, without feeling the smallest degree of compunction, or reflecting that the loss of property is not so grievous to the upright and conscientious, as the loss of their good name, and that a

¶ Eccles. xxviii. 13—21.

spirit

SERM. spirit wounded by a backbiting tongue is
 IX. worse to bear than bodily pain.

This inconsistency St. James takes notice of as an argument against the sin prohibited in the text. *The tongue, says he, is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth*.*

* Jam. iii. 8-14.

4. I next remark, that the consciousness of our sins and imperfections ought to teach us mutual forbearance and charity, one to another. *The angels who kept their first estate, and never left their own habitation**, might urge their innocence as a plea, should they press home upon the wicked, the just charge of guilt and disobedience to God. Yet it is observable that the prince of that host, even *Michael the archangel*, durst not bring a railing accusation against the devil, but said, when contending with him, *The Lord rebuke thee†*. Surely, then, it ill becomes the sinful children of men, especially having this celestial precedent before them, to rail against one another; far less, as St. Jude expresses himself in connection with the above event, to *speakevil of those things which they know not‡*.

Where is the man to be found so firmly rooted in his religious principles, as not to be shaken in an unguarded or a slumbering moment? Are we not the daily sport

* Jude, 6. † Ver. 9. ‡ Ver. 10.

SERMON. of our passions, and particularly of *the sin which doth so easily beset us* *? Is the tempter ever at rest, and are we always prepared to resist him? To those renowned for piety and self-command, let me carry up my appeal; whether, on a fair review of their past lives, and an impartial examination into their hearts, they do not discover enough to blame in themselves? to inspire them with moderation in the judgments they pass on the failings and imperfections of others. *He*, replied our Saviour to the Scribes and Pharisees who were accusing a woman taken in adultery, — *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her* †.

A habitual sense of these things, a fellow-feeling with the infirmities of our brethren, together with the recollection, that in the ordinary commerce of life, others will behave to us as we behave to them, should keep us from evil-speaking, altogether independent of other considerations. The

* Heb. xii. 1. † John, viii. 7.

harsh and severe will be treated with harshness and severity. He who has no bowels of compassion, will not be mercifully used, should he yield to temptation: On which retaliating principles of human nature, Jesus Christ founded these salutary, but much neglected admonitions: *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.*

5. From the nature and attributes of God, and from the terms on which we are to receive acceptance, peace, and reconciliation with him, the great and principal argument against evil-speaking is to be derived.

God is the searcher of hearts, and sees us as we are. He is not only the witness of all

* Luke, vi. 37. 38.

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the deeds done in the body, but knows every motive and principle from which we act. *No thought can be withholden from him**; and no guile can hide from his ever-wakeful and all-penetrating eye. *Hell is naked before him, and destruction bath no covering †. His judgment is according to truth ‡. He is the blessed and the only potentate||*, the sovereign lawgiver, judge, and avenger of iniquity. Hence in immediate connection with the text, St. James thus reasons against evil-speaking:

Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one law-giver, who is able to judge, and to destroy; who art thou that judgest another §? The most celebrated manuscript of the New Testament, reads the beginning of the twelfth verse: *There is one law giver, and one judge.*

* Job. xlii. 2. † xxvi. 6. ‡ Rom. ii. 2.

|| 1 Tim. vi. 15. § Jam. iv. 11, 12.

Now,

Now, the drift of the Apostle's argument appears to be this: SERM.
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God being the primary and original source of might, wisdom, and goodness, retains to himself, or consigns to those he may especially employ as his delegates; the sole power of pardoning and condemning. The law, whether we consider it as the law of conscience, the law of Moses, or the gospel of Christ, was ordained by him to be the rule, by which we are to regulate our own behaviour, and to form a judgment of others. The man then who speaks evil of his neighbour; that is, who condemns him falsely; condemns him on principles different from those by which the Governor of the universe conducts the plan of his moral administration. This is the usurpation of a right which does not belong to us. It is a kind of spiritual rebellion. It presupposes weakness, error, or falsehood in the divine laws; and his acting in opposition to the authority of the law-giver and the judge,

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judge, in whom solely is vested the right and powers of saving and destroying, of remitting the penalties of justice, as is most suitable to the purposes of his will.

Who, then, art thou that judgest another? or, as the question is put in the above-mentioned manuscript, and in some ancient versions, Who art thou that judgest thy neighbour? Art thou a law giver, and a judge? Whence are thy judicial powers? Art not thou as weak, blind, ignorant, prejudiced, and sinful, as the rest of mankind? How then hast thou the impiety to arrogate to thyself the prerogatives of the Almighty, or of that divine Person whom he has appointed to be judge of the quick and the dead?

Far, then, from assuming what is not given to man, we ought to be preparing ourselves for that awful day, when the secrets of human wickedness shall be fully revealed. Instead of condemning others, we should be recognising upon what grounds we ourselves may hope to receive

a favourable sentence from our Judge. He has been graciously pleased to tender unto us by Jesus Christ the remission of sins, on our sincere repentance of them, and conforming to certain rules and conditions of obedience. We learn from our Saviour's excellent form of prayer, that they only are entitled to ask or to expect that remission, who forgive the trespasses of others. The servant who shall throw into prison his fellow-servant for an hundred pence, will be delivered to the tormentors till he pay the ten thousand talents he owes to his king. If those who neglect the duties of mercy, such as to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner, be condemned to everlasting punishment; how much more shall they be cast out from the grace and pardoning goodness of God, who have been guilty of positive and premeditated cruelty?

I shall conclude the discourse with a few observations addressed to those who have suffered in their good name and reputation by evil-speaking.

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The virtuous, for these are most liable to be injured in this way, ought to regard evil-speaking as a part of the trials they are appointed to undergo in this world. Be assured, my brethren, that in proportion to the excellency of your character, and to the importance of your genius and accomplishments, you will raise in low and vicious minds the passions formerly enumerated, that discharge their malice by calumny and slander. Wickedness often escapes unobserved, and, sometimes, concealed under the specious cloak of hypocrisy, meets with applause, of which the Pharisees and their imitators are a proof. On this account Jesus pronounced a curse on such false characters; *Wo unto you when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets* *. In the number of the beatitudes, this holds a place: *Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake; that is, for the sake of your righteousness. Rejoice, and be*

* Luke, vi. 26.

exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

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Be of good cheer then. Perhaps, even here your cause may be pled by the unhired advocates of truth; and your innocence, which envy has been industrious in blackening, may recover its colour, *white as wool*. If the many are easily misled, if the simple are credulous, and the bad have their ears ever open to slander, there are others who will not be so deceived. These will distrust the evil-speaker, and may search into and detect his malicious designs. Light may thus arise out of darkness, and the temporary eclipse, under which you may have laboured, may redound to the brighter lustre and explanation of your injured merit.

Should this not happen, as is too often the case, and should the evil tongue and lips of falsehood prevail here against you, then comfort yourselves with the prospect of the great day of retribution, when the

* Mat. v. 11, 12.

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voice of truth shall be fully heard, and the cause of virtue be finally vindicated. *In the Lamb's book of life*, your actions and your sufferings are faithfully recorded. Then shall be brought to endless shame all who took pleasure in defaming you. They shall be cast into that lake, where the wicked shall be compelled to *cease from troubling*. That mercy they refused to others, shall be withheld from them; incensed justice shall claim them as victims; and they who judged their neighbour, shall be judged by their God. Then, according to the measure by which they did mete to others, shall retribution be made to themselves. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture, and he poureth out the same; but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them**.

In this, as well as in all other situations of distress, look up to that pattern of meekness, resignation, and piety, which your Saviour set before you. Learn from him who was

* Psalm lxxv. 8.

despised

despised and rejected of men; how to bear with injuries. Sinners ought to be silent under them, when the beloved Son of God, even at the time he was brought *as a lamb to the slaughter, was dumb, and opened not his mouth*. If, in his sacred person, perfect obedience to God was aspersed and evil spoken of, they ought not to complain, but from thence ought to be taught, that the judgment of man is always liable to error, and is no infallible test of virtue or of truth.

As Christ suffered so much from evil-speaking, he will tenderly sympathize with those who are afflicted as he was. His fellow-sufferers in this world, are to partake of his glory in heaven. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes. He will pour balm into the wounds inflicted by the tongue that cuts like a razor. He will contemplate with them the stormy ocean, from whose perils they have escaped. He will welcome them to the coast of happiness, rendered more extatic by the great hardships they have endured, and the dangers they have overcome.

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Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Charity covereth a multitude of sins. He that mildly rebuketh a fallen brother, that can shed a tear over his wanderings, and, with the gracious condescension of heaven, can pity and forgive them,—that man is the friend of humanity, the disciple of Jesus, the Son of God,

they have overcome.

Blessed

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S E R M O N X.

On Meekness.

PSALM XXXVII. 8—11.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in anywise to do evil. For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

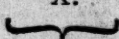
THIS Psalm appears to have been written by David, under the strong impression, which the oppressive measures and fatal catastrophe of Saul had left upon

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his spirit. The main design of it is, to exhort the righteous to persevere steadily in their obedience to God, and not to be discouraged from the faithful discharge of their duty, on account of the prosperity of the wicked; for all the advantages flowing from vice are precarious and short-lived, whereas the recompense of virtue is certain and eternal. As it abounds with observations of great importance to mankind in the regulating their passions, and in the conduct of their lives, David composed it on a plan, which he followed in the form and structure of a few only of his Psalms*.

Saul

* In the original language, this Psalm is divided into twenty-two parts; each part beginning with a word whose initial letter corresponds in order, with the arrangement of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The twenty-fifth Psalm, the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs from the tenth verse to the end, and the four first chapters of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, are all of them divided into a like number of parts, alike distinguished. In the one hundred and eleventh and one hundred and twelfth Psalms, which are divided in the same way, the alphabet runs through the middle of the parts, instead of being placed at their beginning. Corresponding in like manner with the number and order of the Hebrew alphabet, the hundred and nineteenth psalm consists of twenty-two parts, each of them

Saul became jealous of David, on account of the renown he had acquired in vanquishing the champion of the Philistines, and delivering, by that means, his country from a dangerous invasion. The prudence and wisdom which he displayed in the whole of his conduct, after he was taken into the king's household, instead of softening his

them subdivided into eight verses. All the verses in each of those parts begin with a word, whose initial letter is the name of the part. Thus, for example, in the first part called Aleph, all the eight verses begin with a word whose first letter is A; those in Beth with B; those in Gimel with G, and so on.

What particular end was proposed to be promoted by this mode of composition is not certainly known. Perhaps it was adopted in order to assist the memory, in the retention of truths thought to be of high importance in the conduct of life. Perhaps, in the case of the Psalms, it was to dispose and arrange them for that species of music, with which they were to be accompanied, in the service of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple. Or perhaps, in each part or distich thus alphabetically distinguished, there is some metrical arrangement of the words, which gives to them the effect of poetry, although different entirely in its kind from any which at present is known. Whether that arrangement bears any resemblance to the *alliterative* measure which prevailed, and was held in such repute in the middle ages, let those skilled in the sacred poetry of the Hebrews, and in the antiquities of those times, determine.

enmity,

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enmity, added fresh materials to it, till it settled in confirmed malice. He laid several most artful snares for his life, which proved unsuccessful. He next attempted to assassinate him with his own hand; and, not satisfied with driving him into exile, pursued him with an armed force into the wilderness, whither he had fled for safety.

David, though he might have been excusable for retaliating upon an ungrateful monarch, never departed from his loyalty. He continued to fly before him, and twice spared his life, at the very time he was seeking to destroy him, on both of which occasions he could have taken it with the most perfect impunity. This forgiving magnanimity touched, at last, the heart of Saul with remorse. The restored *spear and cruse of water* taken from his *bolster* as he lay asleep, together with David's pathetic expostulation on that memorable occasion, wrung from him these words: *Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail.* So David
went

went on his way, and Saul returned to his place*, and fought no more again for him†. SERM.
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The troubles endured by David and his friends, under the oppressive government of Saul, struck him with a deep sense of the enormity of envy and malice, and of the great miseries to which they give occasion in the world. Therefore, in the text, he exhorts us to beware of such heinous sins, and to cultivate a meek and gentle spirit. *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in anywise to do evil; for evil-doers shall be cut off. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

In discoursing from which words, it is proposed, first, to describe the disposition of meekness; and, in the last place, to explain the reward promised to it.

I. As to the first of these particulars, meekness denotes a temper which is mild, gentle, and not easily provoked; which is humble and forbearing, patient and for-

giving;

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giving; and which stands opposed to the excesses of resentment, to pride, disdain, impudence, and the like contumelious passions. We shall consider it in this comparative light.

The principle of resentment, combined with other passions and sentiments, occasions a variety of appearances in human nature, so minute and endless, as to be beyond the reach, or the importance, of being investigated. We shall, therefore, confine our observations to these three distinguishable and flagrant excesses of it; namely, anger, revenge, or, as it is called in the text, wrath, and fretfulness. They are usually seen in different characters; but, sometimes, by the most miserable of conjunctions, are all to be found in one and the same.

Resentment is that passion which is felt by us, when we receive an injury ourselves, or when we see others unjustly and cruelly used.

There are some who are affected by it in so low a degree, that they put no proper value

value on their own rights and honour, but allow them to be insulted; nor do they enter into those generous sensibilities, which ought to interest them in restraining fraud and violence, and in avenging the cause of the oppressed. They are a very mean contemptible class of mankind. The true descendants of Ham; *they are servants of servants unto their brethren**; and though born in a free country, and placed in an independent condition, are in reality slaves.

1. Anger. Of those that feel resentment in its excess, some are of a hot and vehement temper. On receiving the smallest provocation, real or imaginary, they fall into a passion. During the fit, their reason seems altogether to desert them. They talk, rave, and act like madmen. The hurricane by which they are agitated is, however, too furious to last, and soon subsides into a calm. But short and treacherous is that calm; quickly the skies lour, the winds blow, the billows foam, and discretion and wisdom again suffer shipwreck.

* Gen. ix. 25.

Those

SERM.
X.

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Those

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Those liable to anger are, therefore, inconsistent in their behaviour, and unstable in all their ways. They never persevere in any steady course, but veer about in a thousand directions, according as this outrageous passion blows upon them. They are changeable in their opinions, and fickle in their loves and enmities. Their irritable and inconstant temper sets them at perpetual variance with their neighbours, their connexions, and themselves. In their cool and intermittent moments they are grieved for their folly, they repent of it, and resolve never to be guilty of the like again. Scarce are these good resolutions formed, when some trifling accident moves their spirit, raises a fresh tempest, and drives them to the repetition of like acts of madness and indiscretion.

Now the meek are entirely void of this quick and combustible passion; their nature being either gentle from their constitution, or softened by long habits of patience, forbearance, and self-command. There is a beautiful uniformity in their character which

which never alters. They are constant in their affections, unalterable in their friendship, and steady in their pursuits. The calm undisturbed light in which they see and ponder things, renders them wise in their judgment, and prudent in their behaviour. Reason and benevolence maintain a decided superiority in their councils, and control so perfectly their resentful feelings, that they are never permitted to exercise any improper authority over them, or to pass the boundaries prescribed to them, by our mild and holy religion; so that *in their anger they sin not* *.

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2. Revenge. Others, again, are of a dark, cool, malignant complexion of mind. Their resentment, of which they are extremely susceptible, does not break forth into vehement and angry excesses, but settles in a composed determinate spirit of revenge. This, instead of dethroning Reason, courts the strictest alliance with her, seeks her advice, and fights under her ban-

* Eph. iv. 26.

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ners. So far from demanding hasty and immediate gratification, it waits calmly for proper time, place, and opportunity, in order that its vengeance may be completely sated. It treasures up materials of evil, takes aim with a fixed eye and steady arm, and wounds where its object is most exposed and defenceless.

David, who suffered so many calamities from persons of this atrocious character, thus describes them in the sixty-fourth Psalm: *They whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them? They search out iniquities, they accomplish a diligent search; both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep*.*

Now, meekness is no less directly opposed to this dispassionate desire of doing mis-

* Psalm lxiv. 3-6.

chief,

chief, than to the outrageousness of anger. SERM.
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In a person adorned with this amiable virtue, his feeling of injury is so attempered, and his heart so guarded by it, that malice and cruelty can find no access into it. When he avengeth himself of his wrongs, (for, as shall be shewn by and bye, meekness is by no means incompatible with resentment itself,) he asks no satisfaction for them, but what religion, the respect due to his own rights and reputation, and love of the public good, can fully vindicate. He is disposed to relent, and ready to forgive, when this satisfaction is made to him. He considers his enemies in the Christian point of view, as brethren, as fellow-creatures, and as beings capable of happiness and misery, as he himself is. To the devotees of honour, *falsely so called*, and to the children of the devil, who "was a murderer from the beginning," he leaves that implacable spirit which pardons no offence, retaliates every claim, and glories in calling to the most severe and rigid account, every one who has done them the smallest injury.

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3. Fretfulness. There are others, in whom resentment never rises to that degree of strength which is called anger or revenge, but which consumes itself in a humour peevish, complaining, and for ever discontented. A smile is seldom seen on their countenance, and a good-natured reflection never is uttered by their lips. They are constantly meeting with something or another which displeases them. No person connected with, or dependent upon them, can enjoy peace in their presence. Their miserable temper impairs their health; and, diseases of the body conspiring with diseases of the mind, renders them more and more a plague to themselves and to others, the longer that they drag out their existence.

Meekness, likewise, is strongly opposed to this bad and unfortunate disposition of mind. The meek man enjoys that inward composure and tranquillity, which makes him at peace with himself, and with all around him. Vexations and disappointments, to which we are constantly exposed in this valley of sorrows, do not ruffle a spirit

spirit so regulated as his. He either de- SERM.
X.
spises them altogether, or bears them with
resignation, and thus *delights himself with*
the abundance of peace.

But though meekness be thus fully opposed to the excesses of resentment above taken notice of, we are not from thence to conclude, that it is a disposition inconsistent with resentment itself. No. That principle was implanted deep in our nature, by that infinitely good and infinitely intelligent Being, who formed us in wisdom after our kind; and who made such gracious provision for us, in the frame and constitution of our mind, as was most conducive to promote the purposes of his conferring existence upon us. The want, therefore, of resentment, or of any other original passion, affection, or sentiment, would imply as essential a defect in our inward make, as the want of any of the bodily limbs or organs of perception would argue a defect in the beauty and useful composition of our exterior form.

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The difference betwixt being influenced by a sentiment in its just degree and on a right occasion, and feeling it in its excess and improperly, is no less in magnitude, than the eternal distinction which subsists between virtue and vice, right and wrong. Meekness is consistent with the one, but is utterly incompatible with the other; and, therefore, while it marks a temper averse to do any thing harsh or injurious to another, and which sets bounds to the angry and wrathful elements within us; yet it accords entirely with the views of the most public and independent spirit, and has no interference with the duties we are bound to discharge as men and as citizens.

Hence, by the bye, arises the danger of irritating a man of a meek temper. As he will not conceive enmity against another, without the most just and reasonable grounds of provocation; so, after receiving them, he will not be again reconciled to the aggressor, without a just and reasonable compensation. Anger is a storm which soon

spends its violence: revenge may be bribed: peevishness may be flattered. But goodness, of which meekness is a modification, is a steady principle of action, and when thoroughly provoked will not be appeased, till all proper concessions and reparation are made by the offender, or till he is punished according as his wickedness deserves.

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4. Meekness is not only opposed to the excesses of resentment, but likewise to that temper which appears under different forms, in the proud, the contumelious, the disdainful, the insolent, and the imperious. This haughty offspring of Lucifer want nothing but that boundless power, after which their arrogant mind aspires, to render them the scourge of nations, and the enslavers of mankind. Their law is a will rendered positive and stubborn by self-conceit. Their idol is made up of their own influence, power, and glory, and they would have all men fall down and worship it. Their pleasure consists in overawing and depressing every person below their

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rank, and in making them feel their inferiority in its most humiliating bitterness. They are difficult of access, stern in their demeanour, reserved in their discourse, and decisive and peremptory in their opinions. Their disposition, agreeable to the Scripture account of pride, is naturally and habitually cruel; and at the same time is not free from jealousy, suspicion, and gloomy distrust.

Light is not more opposite to darkness, nor sweet to bitter, than meekness is to pride. For, as the latter consists in putting too high a value upon ourselves and in despising others, so meekness, on the contrary, is allied to humility and lowliness of mind, acknowledges their merit and importance, and contemplates them with eyes full of benignity and goodness. Hence, lovely in itself, this disposition appears still lovelier, when considered as a principle of action, extending its mild influence over us in the discharge of the relative duties of life. It renders a man kind to his relations, gracious to his dependents, condescending to his

his inferiors, unassuming with his equals, respectful to his superiors, and gentle to all. As he is not inclined to be unrelenting even to those who have injured him, except where virtue demands him to be severe; so, far less is he capable of hurting the just sensibility of another, of insulting those at the mercy of his temper, or of studying to increase his own dignity and importance, at the costly expence of causing misery to others.

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Lastly, meekness is opposed to forwardness, petulance, impudence, and rudeness. Persons in whom these odious dispositions predominate, assume airs of importance which are not their due, pretend to merit and talents not their own, and intrude themselves into companies above their rank, and into places and employments for which they are totally unfit. Whereas, full of modesty and condescension, the meek never give offence by audacity of manners, or ever violate the laws of propriety and decorum.

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If they shall seek honours and preferment, they will first of all endeavour to render themselves deserving of them; but they will never usurp the station which superior abilities ought to fill. They will not with unblushing countenance, and with a bold address, thrust back others in order to seize their place. They will not, with boastful pretensions, force themselves into public attention; nor with the smooth insinuating manners of the hypocrite, court the chief seats at a feast, and salutations in the market-place. Their gentle and courteous nature appears in the whole of their deportment, and imparts a gracefulness and beauty to the most indifferent action of their lives.

S E R M O N XI.

On Meekness.

PSALM XXXVII. 8—11.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

HAVING endeavoured to describe the nature of *meekness*, I proceed to explain what we are to understand by the reward promised to it in the text; *The meek*

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SERM. *meek shall inherit the earth; and shall*
 XI. *delight themselves in the abundance of*
peace. According to the plan pursued
 in the former discourse, I shall, at the same
 time, point out the miseries which flow
 from the dispositions of mind that are op-
 posite to it.

The promise of a settlement in a distant
 land was made to Abraham, when he was
 commanded by God to depart out of his
 native country, and to separate himself from
 his * idolatrous kindred. He † accordingly
 took his journey to Haran, where Terah
 his father died; and from Haran he came
 into the land of Canaan. As he passed
 onward, *through the land unto the plain*
of Moreh, the Lord appeared unto him and
said, Unto thy seed will I give this land.
 To Isaac and to Jacob the same grant was
 successively renewed. Joseph, on his death-
 bed, said unto his brethren, *I die: and God*
will surely visit you, and bring you out of this

* Josh. xxiv. 2.

† See Gen. xi. xii.

land,

land, unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob *.

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In fulfilment of these designs of Divine Providence, the Israelites were put in possession of the land of Canaan; and the primary reward promised to obedience under the law, was the secure and undisturbed inheritance of it. Hence it became proverbial with the sacred writers to describe peace, prosperity, success in their affairs and undertakings, and happiness in general, under the figure of *dwelling in, or inheriting the earth*. In this Psalm that figure occurs no less than seven times. So much was it in use, that our Saviour, whose kingdom was not of this world, and who never invited mankind to become his followers for the sake of any temporal advantages, yet adopts it in the beginning of his sermon on the Mount: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth* †.

Those in whom resentment rises to such a height, as to make them hurt and oppress

* Gen. i. 24.

† Matt. v. 5.

others,

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others, are often obliged to atone for their violence by the loss of their property or inheritance, and are sometimes literally *cut off*. But the person who is of a meek and inoffensive nature lives in security; he inherits in quiet that portion of the good things of this life, which God has been pleased to bestow upon him; and *he delights himself in the abundance of peace*. There is no further connection than this, betwixt meekness and the possession of worldly goods. The language in the text is metaphorical; and expresses, that a meek man shall be happy; a point I shall now endeavour more particularly to illustrate.

1. Meekness renders a person beloved by others.

People of a fiery and quarrelsome temper, are a perpetual plague to all who have any connection with them by consanguinity, neighbourhood, or the transacting of business. The same may be said in a lower degree of the haughty and imperious, of the impudent, and the rude.

Anger

Anger is the parent of discord and strife. SERM.
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Revenge is still worse; for if we avoid the man, in whose vehement and uncertain temper there can be no trust reposed, we fear and execrate the ruffian who conceals from us his bad designs, till they are ripe for certain execution.

But altogether independent of personal considerations, and ideas of utility, every expression of insolence and wrath in another, is the natural object of our disapprobation. Antecedent to any reasoning, we feel that haughtiness is disgusting, that pride was not made for man, that rage degrades him to the level of a wild beast, and that malice is the prime attribute of the adversary of God. On the other hand, we love that spirit whose resentments never exceed their proper bounds, nor demand an atonement for its wrongs, but what wisdom and Christian charity can fully authorize. We are pleased with that serenity which remains calm and undisturbed amidst the troubles and confusions of life, and with that sweetness which is slow to anger, and
ready

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ready to forgive. There is, in fine, in the disposition of meekness, a benignity, a grace, and a beauty, which we are formed to approve of, and to esteem.

As the violent passions excite in their object the like reciprocal emotions, and thus spread and multiply hatred, contention, and animosity; so meekness diffuses its quickening influences all around it, and borrows from Heaven a part of its tranquillity. The circle in which the meek man is placed is always at peace. Blessed is the wife of his bosom, blessed his children, and his children's children. Happy his friends, companions, and dependents. He is dear to his relations, and beloved by his neighbours; he enjoys the affection of his domestics, and the good-will of society at large. These are the inestimable inheritance he possesses, which, next to the approbation of his conscience, and the favour of his God, are the first and best of all enjoyments.

2. Meekness is a constant source of inward joy and happiness. *Blessed are the meek,*

meek, for they shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

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Ill-will, or dislike to another, is an unpleasant feeling. Anger, according to the proverbial definition of it, is a short madness. Malice and wrath, notwithstanding any appearances of composure they may put on, fret inwardly the mind, and render it miserable. The paleness of the countenance, the troubled eye, and the restlessness of the night, attest the severity and cruelty of those desires which seek for gratification in the ruin and calamity of another. Suppose the person labouring under them obtains his end, and mark the consequence. The pleasure he has been in pursuit of, is found to be only a short cessation, a temporary relief, from the pains of a disturbed mind. The calm which succeeds this inward conflict is deceitful, like that of the ocean after a great tempest. Still, like that restless element, his mind is tossed and agitated to and fro. Remorse soon succeeds, excites more tormenting reflections, awakes within him grief, pity, and sorrow,

SERM. ^{XI.} sorrow, for those he has injured, pierces him with the most poignant sense of guilt, and describes to his astonished imagination the terrors of a judgment to come.

This, surely, is misery itself; and yet, if the spirit of revenge be not thereby laid, and a life of repentance be begun, indulgence in that spirit, together with repeated acts of injustice and violence, will at last reconcile, or render him entirely indifferent to the remonstrances of conscience. In the language of holy Scripture, this is that obduracy in sin which may be called *having a conscience seared with a hot iron*. We accordingly read in the records of past ages, that the most sanguinary and atrocious tyrants, instead of feeling remorse for their crimes, have persevered and gloried in them up to the last gasp of their lives. The Dictator*, who deluged Italy with the blood of his fellow-citizens, left orders to inscribe upon his tomb; That none had ever surpassed him in the rewards he had bestowed upon his friends, and in

* L. Sylla.

the revenge he had taken of his enemies. If such be happiness, it is a happiness fit only for the devil, the damned in hell, and their representatives in this world, to enjoy.

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By the dictates of reason, and the gentle impulse of brotherly love, the man of meekness regulates his temper and behaviour. The tumults of the haughty and avenging passions never disturb the even and harmless tenor of his way. He says unto them; *Hitherto shall ye come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be laid.* Happy in the enjoyment of a serene and unclouded understanding, he is still happier in the overflowings of a heart full of tenderness and benignity.

If he shall perceive that, in his own personal wrongs, the rights of humanity are invaded, and the public good is hurt, he will then feel and act as a man of spirit and resolution. He knows that Goodness herself put the sword and the balance into the hands of Justice, and that mercy mistimed and misplaced is dangerous cruelty. But in his anger he exceedeth not. He

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can,

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can, therefore, review his conduct with conscious applause, that hath no accompanying sentiment of uneasiness, save, perhaps, a kindly regret, such as angels may be supposed to feel when employed as ministers of vengeance from on high, that human wickedness should arrive at that pitch of enormity, which nothing less than the severity of punishment can check and restrain.

Whenever any passion becomes so steady and vigorous as to form in a man what is called his ruling passion, it extends its influence over the whole of his mind, and is distinctive and characteristic of him. It assimilates to itself the rest of his sentiments and affections, tinctures them with its own colour, and appears not only in such actions as proceed from its own direct and immediate power, but likewise in those which arise from other principles. When a passion is felt in a low, or even in an ordinary degree of strength, it does not impede or mingle with the agency of contrary or co-genial feelings. But when it arrives

arrives at the constitutional pitch which has been described, it is always possessed of this assimilating power, and, like Aaron's serpent, to which it has been elegantly compared, swallows up the other principles of action.

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Now, to apply these general observations to the case before us: When meekness becomes the prevailing disposition of our minds, and the ruling principle of our conduct, it tames the rougher passions, and spreads a softening influence over the soul. It blends itself with every kindred affection, and imparts to them additional grace and energy. The person who nourishes and brings it up to its proper maturity, will at the same time cultivate condescension, modesty, humility, forbearance, patience, forgiveness, gentleness, mercy, and every other amiable virtue by which goodness displays itself, and is distinguished. The bosom, in which so many graces of the spirit reside, must be the abode of happiness; and though the man adorned by them should not be in opulent circumstances,

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stances, and though his earthly inheritance should be small, yet *shall he delight himself in the abundance of peace.*

3. Meekness is well-pleasing to God, and will receive from his grace and goodness its full recompense, in those realms where peace and happiness are to take up their everlasting place of habitation.

God bestowed upon us the principle of resentment to be the guardian of our rights and privileges, to defend us from injuries, and to give stability to the exertions of justice, in bringing criminals to punishment. He doth not require of us to extinguish that principle, and to remain stupid and insensible to affronts and ill-usage. He doth not forbid us to be angry on meeting with just provocation, but in our anger to sin not. At the same time, he hath commanded us to keep that turbulent passion in due subjection, to preserve the supremacy of our reason, and to be gracious and forgiving, as we ourselves would wish to be mercifully treated and forgiven. To appease the indignant and painful emotions
felt

felt by those who can obtain no redress for the injustice and hardships suffered by them in this world, he has revealed to us, by Jesus Christ, That he has appointed a day, called, in high emphasis, *the day of vengeance*, when we shall all appear before his tribunal, there to receive a recompense, according to the deeds done in the body. The children of men may err in the severity, and in the mildness of their punishments. In the blind indiscriminating rage of passion they may inflict more than is just, or in the weakness of pity may pardon crimes subversive of society. But in the spirit of eternal wisdom and eternal goodness, the Judge of all the earth will do that which is right.

Although, then, it should happen that the proud, the unjust, and the vindictive, should escape with impunity from the hand of man, as too often they do, yet in that dread day of vengeance shall they receive *a measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over* *. *The lofty looks of man*

* Luke, vi. 28.

SERM. *shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men*
 XI. *shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall*
be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord
of Hosts shall be upon every one that is proud
and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted
up, and he shall be brought low. They*
shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God,
which is poured out without mixture into the
cup of his indignation †. They shall be cast
into the lake of fire, and shall die the second
death ‡.

But they in whom the character of meekness is perfected, as they have lived a life of preparation for heaven, so they shall be put in possession of it. Their *adorning is the bidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price ||. When the Lord shall arise to judgment, he will save all the meek of the earth §. The morning of the resurrection shall arise upon them with healing in its wings. Their treasure shall be secure from*

* James, ii. 11, 12. † Rev. xiv. 10. ‡ Ib. xx.
 14, 15. || 1 Pet. iii. 4. § Psal. lxxvi. 9.

fraud and violence; their inheritance shall be unalienable and everlasting. To them shall the glad invitation be made, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world**.

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Blessed, then, for ever blessed shall be the meek, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Upon the whole, from every view we take of this amiable and heavenly disposition, considerations arise that ought to determine us to a strict and unremitting cultivation of it. These, as we have endeavoured to prove, are, the love of our fellow-creatures, the peace of our own minds, and the approbation of our God. But, should we be so infatuated as to embrace a contrary choice, and suffer the proud and irascible sentiments to have dominion over us, we shall incur the fear and hatred of all with whom we have any business or connection; we shall be unhappy in this world, and miserable in that which is to come.

* Mat. xxv. 34.

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There are few, indeed, if there are any of our passions, more difficult to tame and regulate, or which have given cause to more calamities, private and national, than those above described, which are opposite to meekness. The victory over them is proportionably honourable, and, like other great exertions, improves and ennobles the character. This, with the blessing of God, is to be obtained by laying them under early restraints, and keeping them under constant subjection. All our appetites, desires, and passions, are manageable at first; it is indulgence, and the want of self-government, which gives them at last so dreadful an ascendancy over us.

To us, whom *the day-spring from on high hath visited*, it will be of the utmost consequence, in our attempts to subdue and regulate our minds, that we study to understand thoroughly, and adopt the principles, by which our Saviour conducted himself, and to imitate that example which he left to his disciples, as the pattern of their imitation.

In

In what high importance he regarded meekness, is apparent from the place it holds in the fair catalogue of virtues with which he began his public instructions: *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth* *. That *we loved them who loved us, and did good to them who do good to us, and lended to them of whom we hope to receive again* †, was in no respect, he said, meritorious; because sinners and publicans were capable of the same: but, *to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us; that these were proofs of our being the children of the Higbest, who is kind to the unthankful, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* ‡.

These sublime, but most difficult lessons, were not only taught by him, but were reduced to practice, during the course of a

* Mat. v. 5. † Ib. v. 43—48. ‡ Luke, vi. 27—35. passim.

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life exposed to every trial of patience, with which human nature can be assaulted. In the severe and pointed reproofs given by him to the Pharisees, on account of their hypocrisy and false pretences to sanctity, we plainly perceive that he was no stranger to the feeling of resentment. Yet in his anger he sinned not, and bore quietly with their virulent opposition, with the troublesome prejudices of his own adherents, together with the contradiction of the Scribes, Lawyers, Herodians, Sadducees, and all kinds of sinners.

Hatred, contempt, ingratitude, and ill-usage long received, evils which sours even the best of tempers, made no bad impression upon his. Amidst all the persecutions and outrageous insults which he daily met with, the Lamb of God appeared in meekness, gentleness, and uncomplaining innocence. When cruel plots were ripening, and instruments of vengeance were preparing for him at Jerusalem, grief and pity for the approaching doom of that devoted city

city suspended entirely his sense of injury and indignation, and brake forth in these words of tender regret and commiseration:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

As this mild and forgiving spirit distinguished a life, in which he had occasion for the continual exercise of it, so it shone forth in its utmost possible glory at his death.

Arraigned as a criminal at the bar, he stood single and unpitied. *He trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him†.* A life of virtue devoted to the good of mankind, did not now receive one grateful return, or call forth one advocate

* Mat. xxiii. 37—39.

† Isaiah, lxiii. 3.

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to plead his cause. One disciple had betrayed; another, and he too the most zealous of the twelve, had denied him; and all the rest of them, in breach of their holy vows of fidelity, forsook him and fled. Witnesses are suborned against him, who produce a false and contradictory evidence. He is insulted by a brutal soldiery, mocked by the priests and senators of his people, scourged by a cowardly and venal judge, who knew he was innocent, and yet condemned by him to die the death, not of a Jew, nor a free citizen, but of slaves and the vilest criminals. Religious hatred, one of the most inexorable of the passions, attended him to Mount Calvary, in order to embitter his last sufferings with scorn and derision.

Then did the prince of this world come against him. Then did the powers of darkness prevail. Then did human wickedness exert itself to the utmost. All which the treachery of friends, and the cruelty of enemies, could inflict, was put in practice. Yet mark his character; then, even then,
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in the first and fiercest agonies of the cross, when all was darkness, horror, and despair around him, and his persecutors were glorying in his ignominy and tortures,—then did his meekness and benignity remain unshaken and unsubdued, and thus addressed God in the mildest intercession that was ever offered up at the throne of his mercy: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* *.

In imitation of the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, let *every one that nameth his name*, adorn himself with those amiable graces, and gentle fruits of the spirit, that are essential to the character of a true Christian. *Let the same mind be in us, that was also in him.* Let the tenor of our lives and conversation accord with the mild yet lofty maxims by which his own were regulated. We cherish the pleasing hope of being admitted hereafter into that society of which he is the head, and of sitting down at the marriage supper he has gone before to prepare. Let us array ourselves,

* Luke, xxiii. 34.

then,

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then, in such garments as are proper for this celestial feast. These, according to St. John the Divine, are *fine linen, clean and white*; which *fine linen* he describes to be, *the righteousness of saints* *.

We are all of us soon to bid adieu to this world, and to depart from this sublunary scene. They who have made unrighteous principles, the ideas of false honour, and a spirit of pride, contumely, and malice, the rule of their conduct, will be for ever excluded from the enjoyments of heaven. Into that sanctuary, *whither the forerunner is for us entered* †, nothing of a sinful and noxious nature can enter, to disturb the love and harmony which are to form the sacred and everlasting bond of union, by which saints and angels are to be allied to one another, and to their God.

To conclude: As the foundation on which our hopes of pardon, and our expectation of future happiness rest, is the goodness of God manifested to us through

* Rev. xix. 8.

† Heb. vi. 20.

Christ,

Christ, let us from thence be taught the necessity of putting on *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*. The remission of our sins is tendered to us, on the express terms, and sole condition, that we forgive the sins of those who have offended us. If, however, we pursue a contrary practice, if we are severe and unrelenting, and rigorous in the exaction of every claim due to us, how can we expect that God, who is a God of justice, righteousness, and truth, will grant to us that mercy we refuse to others, and remit the sum we owe, but never can pay, of ten thousand talents he can demand of us?

May God of his infinite grace and mercies grant, that under the habitual impression of these awful truths, we may know, in this the day of our merciful visitation, the things which belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes. And to his holy name be ascribed all glory, honour, and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N XII.

On the Love of God.

I JOHN, IV. 16. 18. 21.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth is not made perfect in love. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.

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THIS epistle is supposed to have been written by St. John, when he had far declined into the vale of years; and, like the rest of his writings, it exhibits so amiable

amiable a portrait of his character, as may serve in part to account for the high friendship and love that our Saviour felt for him. The principal design of it is, to impress the Christian converts with a strong and lively sense of the importance of the two doctrines, on which, as two pillars, Jesus rested the whole fabric of his religion. These are, the love of God, and the love of our brethren of mankind. Using the language of his Master, the Apostle calls the last of them *a new commandment*;—new, not in regard to time, for it had been *from the beginning*, and had been afterwards instituted by Moses;—but new, on account of the importance given to it, by the injunctions, and still more by the example, of Christ, who left it as the badge to distinguish his true disciples from the rest of the world.

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Having shewn that *he who hateth his brother, is still in darkness*, whatever his professions in religion might be; and that *he who loveth his brother, abideth in light*; St. John traces up the principle of benevolence, or brotherly love, to its fountain-head. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God,*

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God,

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God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. He next proceeds, in connection with these words, to describe more particularly the goodness of God, and the foundation of those regards, which the relation we bear to him ought to excite within us. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* He adds, in the words of our text, *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

It is proposed in the following discourse, First, To explain in what the love of God consists: Secondly, To shew that this *love* excludeth, and is incompatible with, superstitious fear of him: Thirdly, That brotherly love is a certain proof or evidence of a sincere love to God.

I. I am to explain in what the love of God, or the principle of piety consists.

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Although God is *one*, yet various sentiments are felt by us, according to the different lights in which he may be contemplated, and to the different relations in which we are placed to him. The love of God is not, therefore, a simple, but a compound sentiment, which may be analyzed, and resolved into its constituent principles. Considered abstractedly in himself, he is the object of esteem; considered as our Creator and Preserver, he is the object of gratitude; considered as the Being on whom our future happiness solely depends, he is the object of our trust and reliance. These several feelings, of esteem, gratitude, and reliance, together with the desire of enjoying his approbation, and the fear of giving him offence, constitute, what is called in holy scripture, the *love of God*.

In illustration, then, of the first head of discourse, I shall endeavour to give an account of these three sources of regard, esteem, gratitude, and reliance; and next shall demonstrate, that God is the proper object of our love in these several respects.

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I. Beauty may be distinguished into two kinds, moral and natural. By natural or physical beauty, I would be understood to mean that beauty which resides in, or arises from external objects, and which exists without any relation to, or dependence on mind. Fine colours, agreeable sounds, and graceful proportions, are instances of this kind of beauty.

Moral beauty consists in good dispositions, and in a conduct founded on truth, benevolence, and righteousness. It is resident only in spiritual natures, or in the exertions and activity of spirit. All minds are not, however, susceptible of it. Brute creatures, in acting agreeably to their respective instincts, cannot be said to be moral agents. They are moved by a mechanical principle of action, and are not directed in their conduct by any foresight of the consequences of it, or any perception of right and wrong. Satan, and those that revolted with him, are supposed to have lost entirely all sense and relish for good, and to have a fatal propensity to nothing but

but what is evil. Moral beauty, therefore, is only to be found in intelligent beings, such as angels, who never left *their first estate*, or in those who, though they have sinned against God, yet still retain evident vestiges of their divine original. It surpasses all other kinds of beauty, as much as the spirit which animates us excels the gross material elements of which our bodies are composed.

The perception of every species of beauty is attended with pleasant sensations. But the perception of moral beauty is not only accompanied with these, but with a sentiment peculiar to itself, namely, with approbation. As we reflect with inward applause on right principles and virtuous dispositions in ourselves, together with the actions which proceed from them, so we approve in another whatever is good in design and behaviour. This approbation gives rise to our love and regard for him. The pleasure felt by us in contemplating other kinds of beauty has no such concomitant feeling. An intelligent being, acting from benevo-

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lent and upright motives, is the only proper object of it.

Besides the pleasure and approbation excited by righteousness in general, the several virtues, or, as they are called in holy scripture, the several *fruits of the Spirit* *, excite sentiments peculiar to each of them. We approve of fortitude, of prudence, of meekness; but we are differently affected towards the brave, the prudent, and the gentle. The most copious language has not, by the bye, as yet invented names for the most of these feelings.

First in dignity and importance, goodness, or the principle of active benevolence, deserves to be placed. The peculiar sentiment to which it gives birth in a virtuous and co-genial heart, is love. If that goodness be without weakness, if it is guided by wisdom, and is steady and persevering, we are inspired with a reverence and admiration, which, combining with love, forms

* Gal. v. 22, 23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*

esteem.

esteem. We behold with complacency the happiness of which the man, adorned with such virtues, is the cause, though we shared not of it ourselves. We enter into the grateful feelings of those to whom he has been generous and kind. We become interested in his prosperity; we wish him honour and success; and are pleased when he meets with those returns of thankfulness of which he is so deserving.

2. If we ourselves have been the object of his beneficence, if he has relieved us from trouble and distress, or has rendered our condition more comfortable, a different sensation is felt by us. This is called *gratitude*, which consists in putting a proper value on favours we have received from another. There is this essential distinction betwixt gratitude and esteem, that the one lays us under holy and indispensable obligations to do good to the person who is its object; whereas the other leaves us entirely free from the commerce of beneficent actions. We are, indeed, naturally disposed

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to promote the interest of those whom we love and esteem; but we are *in duty* bound to be friendly to the person who has been kind and generous to us. We are guilty of positive wickedness when we avoid or refuse to grant him a benefit that is in our power. We are chargeable with ingratitude, a sin of so black a complexion, and so base a nature, that to call a man ungrateful, was thought by the ancient moralists equivalent to asserting of him, that he was one capable of every thing bad.

If our benefactor be a person whom we esteem, our sense of his goodness is rendered thereby more delightful and obligatory. To an ingenuous and honourable mind, nothing is more humiliating than to be laid under obligations to the unworthy. Gratitude is a sentiment opposite to, and incongruous with, hatred and contempt. When by an unfortunate coincidence of circumstances, the same man is the object of these discordant affections; when he has done us a favour, and is yet in other respects

spects one whom we cannot help blaming and disliking; then do we suffer an inward conflict, easier to be imagined than described. But when esteem and gratitude center on the same person, how happy are we in the discharge of those duties we owe to him. The patronage of the virtuous is pleasant and respectable. It is still more pleasant and noble to repay their benefits with all the honour, kind wishes, and good actions, that is in our power to shew them. In doing this, there is no violence offered to any part of our nature: on the contrary, all is sweetly harmonious in the tone of the passions; our choice and good-will accord in the most perfect manner with every exertion of our gratitude.

3. If our benefactor retains for us the same affectionate disposition, and with that the ability of continuing his friendly offices, then we feel what is called *trust* or *reliance* in him. This sentiment, or principle, is nearly allied to gratitude, and derives strength and stability from it. It is an anticipation of good seen in prospect, and is
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to the future what gratitude is to the past. Although we cannot be said to be grateful for favours never received by us, yet the sure expectation of their arrival imparts great energy to the obligations felt for those already conferred. Thus, the son who has been tenderly brought up by his father, who is the constant object of his cares, and who foresees that he will ever remain the same kind and indulgent parent, is not only affected with a lively sense of gratitude, but from this foresight of the continuation of his love, is naturally induced to repose in him the most generous and unlimited confidence.

Intention, it is true, is not so meritorious as actual benefits. Yet still love is the cause of love, and has a right to proper acknowledgments and returns of good-will. When that intention is realized, it begets gratitude, and gratitude, conjoined with hope, makes up reliance, which, properly laid, forms the corner stone on which true religion is founded,

One Being, and *one* only, is the object of the sentiments of esteem, gratitude, and reliance, in the full unrestricted sense of the words, that is God.

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In the first place, God is infinitely wise.

As he is the first cause of all things, he is the sole and only fountain of all wisdom. *The Lord possessed wisdom in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: it was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was*. All wisdom cometh from the Lord, and is with him for ever. Wisdom hath been created before all things, and the understanding of prudence from everlasting. The Lord created her, and saw her, and numbered her, and poured her out on all his works†.*

He contrived the vast and wonderful plan of the universe, and adjusted, in his divine conception, all its component parts, throughout their infinitude of connections, dependencies, and relative effects. He carried that plan into execution. He still pre-

* Prov. viii. 22, 23.

† Eccl. i. 1. 4. 9.

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sides over it, regulating all things according to the purposes of his will. Every thing is known to him, and nothing is hid from that eye which *neither slumbereth nor sleeps*. He perceives intuitively, and with one glance, the past, the present, and the future, without any error, mistake, or confusion. Unseen himself, he sees all beings; unheard, hears every thing; and, without being the object of any sense, contains, comprehends, pervades, and penetrates, the essence of all things, material and immaterial. As he is their Creator, he knows what is good and beneficial, what evil and hurtful, to his intelligent offspring, in all situations in which they are, or can possibly be placed. Finally, all wisdom residing in, or flowing from God, he is the object of the highest reverence, admiration, wonder, and esteem, which our faculties, or those of the sublimest created intelligence, are capable of feeling.

At present, it is acknowledged, we can only trace the footsteps of his glory, we *know* him but *in part*, and perceive him
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through a glass darkly. But the time will come, when, with enlarged and increasing powers, and with far greater sensibility to excellence, the righteous shall see him more perfectly as he is. In the language of St. Paul *, they shall then *see face to face,* and *shall know as they are known.* But to comprehend adequately the Divine Nature, will ever infinitely exceed the capacity of any of his creatures.

In the second place, We can suppose to ourselves a being, not only destitute of all goodness, but possessed of a disposition that delights in doing mischief. This conception is so familiar to human nature, that belief in dæmons, or evil spirits, has been generally prevalent in the world. The philosophy, in ancient times, of the oriental nations, endeavoured to account for all the disorder and wickedness which take place in the universe, from the hypothesis, that they were caused by a being, or principle, as they were pleased to name him, who was infinitely intelligent and malicious.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

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Many nations worshipped gods positively vicious and ill-disposed. The Moloch of the east, and the god of war in the western hemisphere, besides imaginary deities of inferior note, were thought to be of so cruel and sanguinary a disposition, as to delight in human victims taken in war, and even in infant sacrifice.

But the Lord our God is *gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* *. Goodness was the motive which suggested in his eternal mind the designs his intelligence formed into an all-wise and all-perfect plan. Before *his Spirit moved upon the face of the waters* †, or his creative word had said, *Let there be light*, he was independently and infinitely happy. His felicity sprang essentially from his own nature, and was as full and complete in the eternity which preceded creation, as in the eternity to come after it. It could admit of no possible increase, and of no possible dimi-

* Psal. cxlv. 8, 9.

† Gen. i. 2, 3.

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nation. We can therefore assign no reason for his making all things, but the desire of diffusing happiness among his living and intelligent creatures, proportioned to their various capacities of receiving it. He can derive nothing in return, from the affection and services of those who have their sole and entire dependence upon him, for all which is pleasant, peaceful, joyous, and comfortable, in the condition of their being. To give, and not to receive, to communicate, and not to acquire felicity, was the end for which he conferred existence upon them.

All our enjoyments flow solely from God. He brought us out of nothing into being. He breathed into our nostrils, and we became living souls. *He put wisdom in our inward parts, and the inspiration of the Almighty gave us understanding* *. He bestowed many excellent powers and faculties upon us. *He made us a little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honour* †. The life he inspired into us,

* Job, xxxviii. 36. xxxii. 8.

† Psal. viii. 5.

that

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that precious blessing, on which all others depend, he hath ever cherished, guarded, and supported. In short, all we have tasted, or which we continue to enjoy, of happiness, is entirely derived from the inexhaustible ocean of his love.

As to the evils which we meet with in the course of our pilgrimage through this world, this is not the proper place to inquire at large into their nature, tendency, and final causes. Let it suffice, at present, again to remark, that they are of two kinds.

First, The evils which we bring upon ourselves by folly, negligence, imprudence, and wickedness. These go under the name of *punishment*; whether they be internal, occasioned by shame, disapprobation, and remorse; or external, injuring us in our interest, person, and reputation. They are a great check upon wickedness and disorder; they prevent and avenge crimes, and protect mankind in the enjoyment of their rights and privileges. Without them, the society of our fellow-creatures, together with all the comforts and happiness arising from

from it, could not possibly exist. Fraud, rapine, and violence, would waste uncontrolled, and render this world a scene of terrors and desolation.

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The second kind comprehends all the troubles, difficulties, hardships, and misfortunes, of which we ourselves are not the blamable cause. These are called *sufferings*. They are intended to cure us of levity and thoughtlessness, to teach us wisdom, to inform us that perfect happiness is not to be found in this world, to make us recognise our proper home, and lay up our treasure, where neither moth or rust corrupt, nor injustice and oppression can enter to deprive us of them. So that, upon the whole, our punishments and sufferings, instead of militating against the benignity of the divine administration, are clear and demonstrative proofs of it.

Whether, then, we seriously and justly reflect on our existence and rank in the scale of being, or on the mercies daily enjoyed by us, we find in our Creator and Preserver an object more than adequate to

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the utmost gratitude of our soul. To pure and disinterested benevolence, these displays of goodness to us owe wholly their origin and continuance. They are, besides, *more than can be numbered*, costlier than can be valued; and, if we only make a wise and virtuous use of them, are from their commencement to everlasting. Whereas, from the nature of things, the benefits we receive from our brethren of mankind, creatures weak and dependent like ourselves, though superior to us in wealth and influence, are few, limited, remitting, and temporary. Nor is this all. Although by the noble and generous they are conferred upon us from the best of motives, the desire of doing good; yet how often are they prostituted by others to gratify their pride and vanity, to increase their popularity, and to serve the purposes of avarice and ambition. But nothing venal, capricious, or selfish, can have any share in the divine counsels. The very supposition is absurd and impious. Our gratitude to God rests, therefore, on the most firm, solid, and unmoveable foundation.

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In the third place, God is infinitely powerful. The plans devised by his goodness and wisdom could not have been executed, without a power proportioned to their magnitude. *Power* accordingly exists in the first Cause, subservient to the purposes, and commensurate to the infinity, of these attributes.

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However incomprehensible it may be to us, as there are many incomprehensible things in the divine nature; yet it is demonstratively true, that there was a time prior to which nothing did exist, spiritual or material, throughout the immensity of space, but God only. When he displayed himself in the character of Creator, he made and formed all things, according to the purposes of his will. He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and they stood fast. At his almighty word light sprang from darkness, creatures of various kinds and orders came into existence, and the fabric of the universe arose into being in all its beauty, grandeur, and magnificence. *God saw every thing that he had*

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māde, and behold it was very good *. The great characters of his divinity, his power, his wisdom, and his goodness, were stamped indelibly on all his works. The morning stars sang songs of triumph, the earth rejoiced, and the heavens were glad.

We are not, however, to imagine, that when God had finished the glorious work of creation, and put the whole system, material and immaterial, into motion, that he ceased to exert his omnipotent powers, and left the management of things to secondary causes, and to delegated authority. No, we are not to form such unworthy conceptions of the Divine Being. The works of Providence require the exertion of all the attributes employed in the contrivance and execution of the work of creation.

The same power which at first created all things, hath continued ever since to support, enliven, and invigorate them. By it the sun still shines, the moon sheds her influences, and the stars move undisturbed

* Gen. i. 31.

in their spheres. By it the purposes of Divine Wisdom are promoted throughout the infinity of nature's operations. The instincts by which the vast and innumerable tribes of irrational creatures are guided in the support and continuation of their kinds, are all manifestations of that *almighty hand which hath ordered all things in measure, and number, and weight**. In him we, his intelligent offspring, *live, and move, and have our being†*. Through his never-ceasing agency, cherubim and seraphim, angels and archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, and potentates, enjoy their existence and celestial honours. There is no power but by him; no spring of material, animal, or spiritual activity, but through him; no life, but what he constantly preserves. He is in all, through all, and over all. He is underived, immutable, and eternal; might, strength, energy, dominion, and sovereignty, for ever and ever.

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It is evident, from what has been said, that nothing can control or resist the will

* Wisd. Solom. ii. 20.

† Acts, xvii. 28.

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of God. All power being derived from him, must depend solely and entirely upon him. As his word brought all things into being, so his word can at once annihilate them. The combined force of all created existencies are less to his omnipotence; than *a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth* is to the unmeasurable extent and depth of waters contained in the ocean. *His dominion*, as the proud king of Babylon was obliged to acknowledge, *is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing. And he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou*?*

From these three primary attributes, *goodness, wisdom, and power*, all the rest of the moral attributes of God are deducible; such as pity, compassion, forgiveness, mercy, truth, justice, righteousness, and the like. At the same time it may be demonstrated

* Dan. iv. 34, 35.

from

from them, that falsehood, impurity, injustice, malice, cruelty, and wickedness, by whatever name distinguished, are absolutely incompatible with his nature. To those who habituate themselves to the contemplation of this sublime subject, no mathematical contradiction will appear more absurd, than the supposition that any thing bad can find place in a mind infinitely wise, powerful, and good.

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Now to apply these observations to the subject before us ; it is plain that as God, on account of his intrinsic excellence and perfection, and of his past goodness to us, is the object of our esteem and gratitude ; so he is likewise the object of our trust and reliance ; because he is the source from whence our happiness continues to flow, and is the rock on which our hopes are founded. The life he first bestowed upon us, is constantly supported by him. *He gives us food to eat, and raiment to put on**. *He maketh the out-goings of the morning and the evening to rejoice over us†*. He keeps

* Gen. xxviii. 20.

Pf. lxx. 8.

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us from evil during the day, and spreads a shield over us in the night. If he visits us with pain and sickness, with sorrows and disappointment, it is to draw our affections to himself from things which cannot give us real happiness, and to prepare and qualify us for a better world. *If it is appointed unto men once to die**, he hath given us the consolations of true religion to encourage and strengthen us in the awful crisis of our dissolution. Those who did not enjoy the benefit of divine revelation, were led, from their own feelings, and from the light of nature, to conceive the pleasing hope of immortality, as *God never left himself without a witness†* among any of the children of men. Others were favoured with manifestations of his will. He spake by the patriarchs of ancient times, afterwards by Moses and the prophets; and, in these latter ages, by Jesus and his apostles. The terms of salvation are so clearly revealed in holy scripture, that he who runneth may read them. We have no occa-

* Heb. ix. 27.

† Acts, xiv. 17.

sion for any further information concerning them. *Life and immortality are brought to light* *. The mysteries of the invisible state are explained. By the death, and still more by the resurrection, of Jesus Christ, the veil which separates the material from the spiritual world, is rent asunder; *Death is deprived of his sting, and the grave of its victory* †.

Thus all our hopes of happiness, either in this present state, or in the untried scenes of being opened to us by our holy faith, depend entirely on God. In the figurative, but expressive language of David: *The Lord is our rock, and our fortress, and our deliverer; our God, our strength, in whom we will trust; our buckler, and the horn of our salvation, and our high tower* ‡.

It ought further to be attended unto in this argument, that there is none else besides God, on whom we can rely for certain good. We are weak and dependent creatures, and have nothing we can call pro-

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † 1 Cor. xv. 55. ‡ Psalm xviii. 2.

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perly our own. Mankind may give to one another temporary aid and relief, but cannot communicate what they do not possess themselves, pure and lasting felicity. The little they have in their power, they have not always the wish to bestow. The generous and beneficent do not form a large class, and their worth is the more to be valued. In general the patronage of the rich and powerful is precarious, as the testimony of those who have been disappointed by them, and experience with the world, sadly attest. Others, whom we had fondly numbered among our well-wishers, desert us when we have need of their assistance; and our real and sincere friends have it seldom in their power to promote our interest as they would desire.

But however supported and countenanced in the course of our lives, human aid can be of no avail to us, when disease and sickness come upon us, and death approaches. We must then fight the battle alone, independent of patrons, relations, and friends. Our alliance with this world is at an end, and the arm of man cannot save.

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But God is truth, he cannot deceive. He is omnipotent; who hath resisted his will? He is unchangeable; all who are worthy of his favour will assuredly meet with it. The love of friends may wax cold; affection may turn into hatred; and our kind deeds may be repaid with ingratitude; *but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing* *. He will guide them by his counsels, and will never leave nor forsake them in their distress. He will inspire hope and comfort into their fainting heart. *When they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they will fear no evil; for he is with them, his rod and his staff they comfort them. He will make them to lie down in the green pastures, and lead them beside the still waters* †.

Thus considered abstractedly in his own nature, and independent of his relation to us, God is the object of wonder, admiration, awe, reverence, and all those feelings which compose the utmost esteem: considered as the cause of all the happiness we have ever enjoyed, he is the object of our highest

* Psal. xxxiv. 10.

† Psal. xxiii. 1, 2.

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gratitude: considered as the Being from whom all our future felicity is to be derived, he is the object of our most unbounded trust, confidence, and reliance. He is God over all; our Creator, our Preserver, our Saviour. Corresponding to these most endearing and holiest of relations, we owe him all the sentiments above enumerated, which, combined and united into one, constitute *the love of God*.

Such is the noble principle of obedience mentioned in the text, and such is God. *We know*, says the Apostle, *and believe the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.*

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On the LOVE of GOD.

I JOHN, iv. 16. 18. 21.

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.

WHEN we apply the account which I have given of the love of God to our own hearts, we shall find that there are two other sentiments which enter into its composition, or arise necessarily from it; the

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the one, the *desire* or ambition of enjoying his approbation; the other, the *fear* of giving him offence.

We are desirous to obtain the favour, and to deserve the applause, of those whom we esteem. We are mortified, when we are treated by them with coldness and disrespect. We eagerly wish for opportunities to testify our gratitude unto a generous benefactor, are afraid of displeasing him, and regard ourselves personally concerned to promote his honour and interest. We not only think it the height of folly, but of wickedness, to give provocation to the person on whom our happiness depends.

These are the natural and genuine feelings of a good mind, and surely it can make no difference in them, whether their object be a fellow-creature, or a being of a superior order. The degree in which they affect us may and ought to vary, according to the excellency of our benefactor's character, the highness of his rank, and to the favours we have received from him. The better
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his character, the nobler his condition, the more generous and disinterested he is, and the greater his benefits to us; so much the more lively and vigorous ought to be our sense of his goodness, and of the obligations under which he has laid us. The knowledge that he is infinitely perfect, that is, the knowledge that he is infinitely powerful, wise, and good, so far from extinguishing that sense, as has been alleged, ought to be the cause of exalting it to the utmost. It is the sole ground and foundation of the Christian precept, and first principle of all religion; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind* *.

Let not those in whose unhallowed bosom religion never kindled up her flames, deny the reality, or give the name of wild and visionary enthusiasm to this divine principle. As long as perfect wisdom excites reverential awe; as long as mercies received call forth gratitude, and benefits ex-

* Luke, x. 27,

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pected give birth to reliance; so long will God Almighty be loved by those, who seriously and truly reflect on his glorious attributes, and on the intimate and sacred relations they bear to him. They will value his approbation as the first of all blessings, and as including within it all which can render us independently and eternally happy. They will, therefore, be fearful of incurring his displeasure, and of marking their character with the indelible stain of ingratitude, and of brutish insensibility to his goodness.

That there is a blank, or a satiety, in all earthly enjoyments, is a truth too well known, and deeply felt, to need any proof. Struck with the false appearances of things, many rest in the means of happiness, instead of happiness itself, and are disappointed. Others expect more from the innocent pleasures of life, than what they can yield, and grow disgusted with them. For the sake of immediate gratification, the foolish daily make sacrifice of their health, their reputation, and peace of mind. An endless variety of expedients,

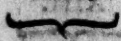
expedients, in the way of amusement, exercise, company, and business, is tried, to beguile the time, and to fill up the void still left; and never supplied, in our breast.

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The experiment of human felicity, made on the largest and most magnificent scale, by the wisest of mankind, extorted from him this bitter and oft-repeated confession: *Whatsoever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them: I with-held not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour; and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit, that is, no substantial and permanent happiness, under the sun*.*

We have desires, then, for happiness that are never gratified, and capacities to receive it, which nothing in this world can satisfy. This is matter of such certain fact and undoubted experience, as requires, in-

* Eccl. ii. 10, 11.

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dependent of the high authority of Solomon, no proof. Would it not then argue some strange defect in our make and constitution, or in the situation in which we are placed, were there no objects adequate to our just and reasonable aspirations after felicity, and all-sufficient to render us blessed? The brute creatures, according to their kinds and infinitely varied faculties, are all of them placed in such circumstances, and provided in such things, as render them as happy as the condition of their being can admit of. Shall he that is formed in the image of God, be the sole exception against that wisdom, which never formed any thing in vain? Shall he that ought to be the most illustrious proof of the perfection of the sovereign Architect, be produced as the only unfinished abortive work of his hands? No surely. Besides the analogies already taken notice of, we have arguments arising from the consideration of our own wondrous frame, which are sufficient to enable us to answer the question in the negative.

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He that formed the eye, formed likewise every object, which by means of it can give us pleasure. He adorned the face of nature with a profusion of beautiful colours, set the rainbow in all its glory in the clouds, and spread over us the canopy of the heavens, with loftiness and magnificence which surpass description. *He that planted the ear,* filled the woods, the lawns, the very uncultivated wilds, with music; made the streams and rivers please in their course, and even the storm, the sound of the great deep, and the voice of his thunders, to delight the contemplative mind. In like manner, every other organ, by which we are qualified to relish the pleasures of sensible things, hath its corresponding objects of gratification. In this respect there is no imperfection in our make, and nothing wanting in the condition in which we are here placed.

But the argument will reach no further. This perception of the beauties of creation, this fitness in the senses to receive, and in outward objects to communicate, pleasure, leaves unoccupied and unblest the sublimer

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faculties of the soul. Still we feel aspirations after some higher good, and longings for some more fixed and satisfactory happiness, than is to be enjoyed here below. We therefore conclude, that there must be somewhat, if not in this world, yet in the regions beyond the grave, which can supply all our wants, and satisfy all our desires. If provision is made for all which the material part of our nature requires, it is reasonable to hope, that the other part of it, which connects us with the intellectual and higher orders of being, will not be neglected, and left destitute of what is conducive to its perfection and happiness.

In what, then, does the chief good of man consist, and where is it to be found? It is not placed in ourselves. Nothing in this world can bestow it. From beings whose life and enjoyments depend upon another, however exalted in the scale of existence they may be, plenary and unchangeable happiness cannot be derived. This must flow from some cause that is fixed, eternal, and liable to no alteration;
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that is, it must flow from God. It consists in the exercise of those affections and faculties that rest in him as their object and final cause; and which, as has been shewn, constitute the love of God.

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In examining any piece of curious workmanship, we are pleased with the marks of contrivance and ingenuity displayed in it. The more useful it is, the more pleasure we feel. If we transfer our contemplation from things fashioned by the hand of man to the works of Omnipotence, that pleasure is exalted in degree, both in itself, and with the mixture of other sentiments; such as the highest wonder and admiration, the love of novelty, the desire of exploring the causes of the great, the beautiful, and the sublime, and of explaining the phenomena of nature. Each discovery of wisdom and design, is attended with additional delight. An inexhaustible source of happiness is thus opened to us in the vastness and infinity of the works of creation, which at the same time admits of enlargement, according as our powers shall continue to expand throughout all eternity.

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This is not all. Still this happiness, although elegant and refined, is of a secondary kind. There is a higher happiness to which it naturally leads, and without which it will be found unsatisfactory.

In order to explain this, I would observe, that the mind, which contrives what is ingenious and useful, is more the object of our admiration, than the work produced by it. Actions of benevolence, piety, and public spirit, are beautiful in themselves; but the generous, the devout, the patriotic soul, is still more beautiful. In the study of characters renowned for virtue there is a divine pleasure, attended with sentiments of applause and sympathy. Mankind are susceptible of these, according to the purity and excellence of their own hearts. The brave admire the brave, the just esteem the just, and the humane love the merciful and charitable. The righteous are thus mutually to one another the cause of happiness. Hence arise the pleasures of domestic love and affection, friendship, good neighbourhood, and a life of peace and tranquillity, which, next to those of an approving

proving conscience, are by far the best of all human enjoyments.

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Now, for the same reason that excellent qualities and dispositions in our fellow-creatures are the ground of present happiness, we may infer, that the knowledge of higher and purer natures, and fellowship with them, will much more be the cause of happiness hereafter. In the gradation of being upwards, and in our own progressive approach towards perfection, there is thus treasured up a fund of enjoyment constantly augmenting, till our faculties, fully matured, shall at last be employed and absorbed in the contemplation of the first and universal Cause,

From what then has been advanced, these two conclusions may be drawn:

First, As far as the soul of man excels the rudest workmanship of his hands, as far, and infinitely more so, does the Eternal Mind surpass in glory the things he has created, material or spiritual, human or angelic. The delight, therefore, arising from the beatific vision of God, must be

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SERM. infinitely superior to that which is felt from
 XIII. the knowledge and study of his works.

Secondly, If inferior intelligences are to one another reciprocal objects of happiness, must not that Being in whom all beauty, excellence, wisdom, and might, centre, be infinitely more unto them the cause of felicity? The relation of God to his creatures is more close and intimate, than what can possibly subsist between any of them among themselves. All blessings flow from him. In him, and in his favour, there is an undecaying *fulness of joy*. In our ascent in the scale of being, when we shall be what angels and archangels are at present, we shall find, in the whole of our celestial progress, cause for growing wonder and praise. Our love shall increase with increasing ages, and with improving powers. Our bliss shall keep pace with our love; heightened not only in degree, but furnished with new sentiments and faculties, which are incompatible with the infancy of our existence. Thus, on the surest foundation, may we expect to enjoy in the love of God perfected, the long-desired, the full, the satisfactory

factory good, that shall be large as our amplest wish, and lasting as our immortal souls.

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II. Having thus endeavoured to explain the love of God, let us proceed to assign the reasons why it excludeth fear. *There is no fear*, says the Apostle, *in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment: he that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

That there is one kind of fear necessarily connected with the love of God, has been already shewn. This fear is of the same nature with that care and anxiety observed by the virtuous not to displease, but to oblige their benefactor. It is like the pious concern with which a good son is inspired to give no offence, but to shew all respect and obedience to an affectionate parent. In the same manner, they who truly love the Lord, are fearful of provoking his resentment, are zealous of gaining his approbation, and *count all things but loss for the excellency of his favour*. Hence, on account of its importance as a principle of duty,

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duty, *godly fear* is strongly enjoined us in Holy Scripture. It animates his true and sincere worshippers on earth; it is felt by the angels in heaven.

The fear, therefore, mentioned in the text, cannot be this wise, holy, and religious fear, but some other sentiment altogether different from it.

To account for this sentiment, and, at the same time, to explain its nature, I remark, that there are many who discover a wonderful propensity to ascribe a character of malevolence to the Deity. Of a gloomy and unhappy cast of temper, they see every thing tinged with a sable hue, and are insensible of the beauties lavished so profusely on the works of creation. They trace out the power of God in thunders, storms, whirlwinds, and earthquakes; and mark his steps in the desolations of war, famine, and pestilence. They infer from thence, that he is a being of a fierce and cruel nature, whose wrath is easily kindled, and not to be appeased without an atonement equivalent to the injury done to his paramount

mount authority. They seem hardly to admit compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and the like amiable attributes to belong unto him. Inexorable severity, inflexible justice, and a vengeful spirit armed with the weapons of omnipotence, compose their idea of that being whom they place at the head of the universe. Dismal and superstitious terror forms the character of their religious opinions, and expresses itself in modes of worship black as their creed, and portentous like the demon whom they acknowledge as their lord.

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Now, love of God is utterly inconsistent with this tormenting fear. We cannot regard the same being, at the same time, with affections so opposite to one another; because those qualities and dispositions which excite the one, extinguish the other of them. If God be gracious, merciful, and forgiving, he is the object of love; if he be implacable and unrelenting, he is the object of fear. He cannot be both gracious and implacable, merciful and unmerciful, these being contradictions in terms; therefore love excludeth fear, and fear excludeth

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love *. But it hath been demonstrated, that God is love; and it must therefore follow, in the words of St. John, that *there is no fear* in that love we owe to him; for *perfect love casteth out fear: he that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Love and superstitious fear differ entirely in their nature from one another. The one is a pleasant sensation, that spreads calmness and serenity over the mind. The other is uneasy and painful. As the Apostle expresses it, *fear bath torment.* Those under its influence cannot be at rest. It intrudes upon them at all times, and in all places. It covers them with a habitual gloom, which even scenes of cheerfulness and festivity cannot dispel, which deprives the banquet of its sweetness, and spreads their bed with briars.

But in order to arrive at the knowledge of the comparative importance and value of those two sentiments, let us shortly attend to their influence on our behaviour in

* These feelings can no more exist together, than light can associate with darkness, good with evil.

ordinary

ordinary life, from whence the superiority of love as a principle of obedience to God will be clearly discerned.

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What we do from love is voluntary and pleasant. It is agreeable to oblige the person we esteem, and delightful to discharge the debt of gratitude. A son is happy in paying all due honour to a worthy parent. The virtuous servant of a good master rejoices to obey him, and considers his interest as in some respect his own.

If fear be the motive from which we act, our behaviour under it is not a matter of choice, but of constraint and necessity. We hate the person of whom we are afraid: we will do no more to serve him, than what we think merely sufficient to escape his wrath, and secure our own quiet. Slaves have no other motive to work for a cruel task-master, than dread of the bloody scourge. What duty is prescribed to them they must perform; but they will do nothing more. Could they avoid punishment, instead of obliging, they would leave nothing undone to hurt and mischief him.

A tyrant

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A tyrant armed with power extorts implicit obedience to his commands. His spies and informers, his guards and executioners, strike terror into his subjects, and spread a treacherous calm round his throne. His favour is courted with the most servile assiduity. All are tame and submissive to his will. Yet what is all this, but cunning and hypocrisy? Their hearts belie their demeanour. In secret they detest and abhor him. The sparks of mortal enmity, though concealed, are not smothered; and are ready, on the first safe occasion, to catch fire, and break forth with ruin upon him.

How base and unworthy is this forced compliance, compared with the free and uncompelled obedience which subjects pay to a king, whom they regard as their father and protector! Their loyalty, founded in love, renders them attached to his person, and faithful to his interest. They are anxious to promote his glory. They have the most tender sympathy with him in his sufferings and distress; and offer up to Heaven prayers unfeigned, and the holiest
vows,

vows, for his deliverance from them. They rejoice in the stability of his throne, are valiant in his defence, and he rules over them by the noblest of tenures, their esteem and affection.

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It is indeed observable in common life, that a person of a bold implacable temper, receives often a great deal of outward deference. His dependents, associates, and connections, are afraid of irritating him. They flatter and humour him, on the same principle that certain African savages are said to worship the devil. But hypocrisy will not always conceal, nor hatred smother; and usually terminate in open quarrels and animosity.

On the other hand, the generous and noble-minded gain the homage of the heart. The honours they receive, are the expressions of real love. Their goodness is thankfully repaid by the grateful, with hearts overflowing with joy. A foundation is thus laid for the commerce of kindly sentiments, and of benevolent actions. Favour begets favour, good-will becomes recipro-

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reciprocal, and the bonds of regard are drawn closer and closer, till they consolidate into friendship. If in age, circumstances, or birth, we are inferior to our benefactor, what is diminished in point of friendship, a state that requires a certain degree of equality in those respects, is amply recompensed by veneration. The favour a great man bestows upon us, is enhanced by his rank. The patronage of the wise and good, is valued on account of the excellent qualities of their character. If the man we esteem be our friend, that esteem heightens our gratitude.

Upon the whole, then, it would appear, that he who acts under the influence of fear, is always in secret an enemy to the person who is the object of it. He is no longer to be trusted, than while he remains in that state of slavish subjection. As soon as he is emancipated from it, he declares himself an enemy, and endeavours to make all possible reprisals.

But real love is a fixed, uniform, and constant source of kind affections, and

good deeds. We delight to continue under its gentle authority; for its laws are the laws of liberty. It operates upon us, when no mortal eye can perceive its motions, or prompt us to seek applause: it is the regulating spring of exalted minds. They who excel most in virtue, have the quickest discernment of moral worth, and the warmest feeling of gratitude; whereas the wicked have little regard for the one, and scarce any conception of the obligations arising from the other. Fear, slavish fear, is the proper motive to work upon them, as it is upon the more untractable part of the brute creation.

III. After what has been advanced in illustration of the two first heads of discourse, a few words will suffice to point out, what was proposed in the last place to be explained, that brotherly love is a certain proof or evidence of a sincere love to God.

As God is independently, supremely, and eternally, happy in himself, he can receive no benefits from his creatures. His

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glory,

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glory, as it can admit of no diminution, can receive no increase whatever. Our praises and thanksgivings, our mortifications and self-denial, our sacrifices and oblations, can make no alteration on that which is fixed and unchangeable. Yet, as the test of our love, he has been pleased to require of us obedience unto his will. This, says St. John, is the love of God, that we keep his commandments *. The most punctual observance of every religious duty, public and private, is of no value in his sight, except it originate from a principle of piety, and be accompanied with a correspondent tenor of life. The worship of the righteous is to God the sweetest of incense; the prayers of the hypocrite are his abomination. Reason and revelation consent in this, as well as in every other practical truth, that *without holiness no man shall see God* †.

Of all our humble endeavours to serve him, none are so well-pleasing, and so truly acceptable to him, as the habitual exercise of the benevolent affections; inso-

* 1 John, v. 3.

† Heb. xii. 14.

much,

much, that our Saviour, in his account of the last judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, declares it the criterion by which the virtuous are to be distinguished, and finally separated from the wicked.

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He who esteems his brethren of mankind for their good qualities, shaded as they are with so much weakness and imperfection, will much more esteem that Being in whom all perfection dwells. He who is merciful, will love the pure fountain of grace and mercy. He who is forgiving, will love and reverence him who is slow to anger, and ready to forgive. He who is grateful for the partial favours received from man, will surely not be insensible of what he owes to his Maker, his Preserver, his Saviour.

But he who has no esteem for the wise, and no love for the good; who is not pleased with displays of excellence in his fellow-creatures; who is unkind to a friend, and unthankful to a benefactor; who has no reverence for his superior, no fear of

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offending the righteous, no compassion on the miserable, and no oil and wine for the wounds and bruises of the unfortunate; is absolutely and totally incapable of loving his God. He is destitute of those faculties without which it is impossible to comprehend the glories of his nature, to perceive our relation to him, or to feel those sentiments which constitute piety. And in proportion as those faculties and affections are weak, or are improperly directed, will our love to him be weak and ineffectual to salvation. The improvement, therefore, and cultivation of them, forms the most serious employment of our lives, in comparison with which all other occupations are trifling.

I conclude in the words of the divine advocate for love to our God, our Saviour, and our brethren:

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*

* 1 John, iv. 7, 8.

If

On the Love of God.

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If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.*

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* 1 John, iv. 20, 21.

S E R M O N XIV.

On the CHARACTER of DOEG the
EDOMITE.

I SAM. xxii. 18, 19.

And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

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HAD the connection of these words with the history of the Israelites been lost, and had imagination been employed to fill up the blank, we would have supposed,

posed, in order to account for so horrible a butchery, that some formidable rebellion had been excited by the priests, that the king was in the utmost danger, and that the people were in such a state of anarchy and disobedience, as to require this extraordinary punishment to reduce them under authority:—Ahimelech, a person illustrious by his birth and the office of high-priest, and *four score and four persons that wore a linen ephod, even the women and children*; and, lest the principles of treason should have been infused into them with the milk of their mothers, the very *sucklings*, all involved in one undistinguishing massacre; their substance destroyed, and all their cattle put to the sword; events so strange and cruel, as to make us infer the utmost disloyalty in the priests of Nob.

This conjecture, however natural, would not have ascribed to these events their true cause; which was the violent and jealous ambition of Saul, inflamed by the insinuations of Doeg. It will, therefore, be necessary to give an account of the transactions with which the text is connected, and

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to unfold the character of the ruffian who acted the chief part in this dreadful tragedy.

The resentment of Saul against David was first kindled by the triumphal song of his subjects, as he was returning from the defeat of the Philistines: *Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands.* The king, it is remarked by the historian, *was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward*.*

The wisdom and valour displayed by David, after he was taken into the king's household, instead of softening his resentment, changed it into settled hatred, dread of his abilities, and suspicion of his popularity, which increased to that degree of violence, that he formed the design of assassinating him, and twice attempted to smite him to death with a javelin.

Jonathan, after endeavouring in vain to allay those fierce animosities, and perceiv-

* 1 Sam. xvii. 7, 8, 9.

ing that the life of the friend whom *he loved as his own soul**, was in the most imminent danger, advised him to fly from the presence of Saul. David accepted his salutary counsel, and their separation was accompanied with many tears, and with protestations of everlasting friendship. He upon this retired, private and alone, to Nob, a city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin, where Ahimelech and the chief priests with their families resided, because the ark of the covenant was, at that time, lodged there.

Ahimelech, or, as he is called by Josephus, Abimelech, a descendant of Aaron, was then high-priest. He was alarmed at the appearance of David, came trembling to meet him, *and said unto him, Why art thou alone and no man with thee* †? David having recently escaped so much danger, and knowing the loyalty of the high-priest, pretended that he was dispatched on business of great secrecy and importance, and that a party of the king's servants was to meet him at an appointed place.

* 1 Sam. xviii. 1.

† 1 Sam. xxi. 1.

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He then entreated to be assisted with some bread, or with any thing that was *present*. It happened that Ahimelech had nothing to give him, but the *shew-bread*, of which it was not lawful for any but the priests to eat. As he, however, considered David in the light of a servant sent by the king on affairs of high consequence, he acted as became a dutiful subject, and a man of liberal sentiments in religion. He departed, on so pressing an emergency, from the institutions of Moses, and the established usages of his country. After putting to him a few questions, relative to the ceremonial purification of some of his followers, who had by this time joined him, *he gave him hallowed bread.*

David next requested of the high-priest, to provide him in a sword or spear, alleging, as the reason of his being unarmed, that the king's business was urgent, and *required haste.*

It appears to have been customary with the Israelites, as well as with other ancient nations, to consecrate the military trophies, which had been taken from their enemies.

The

The sword, accordingly, of Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, whom David had vanquished, lay *wrapt in a cloth* behind the sacred vestments. Ahimelech informed him, that he had no other weapon in his possession, and said, in allusion to its being devoted to the Lord, *If thou wilt take that, take it; for there is no other save that here.* David said, *There is none like that, give it me;* and on receiving it, fled immediately to Achish king of Gath.

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In the behaviour of Ahimelech to David there was nothing faulty or treasonable. On the contrary, he displayed a spirit of loyalty and obedience that was highly meritorious. David came professedly to him on the king's business, which he would naturally conclude to be important, on account of the deep secrecy with which it was carrying forwards. He was, besides, the son-in-law of Saul, and had been formerly employed in commissions where bravery and great talents were required. The high-priest did all in his power to second the present enterprise, proving himself a firm and generous supporter of the royal

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royal authority. He even scrupled not, for the sake of promoting the public good, to violate a positive appointment of religion. He granted what the superstitious would have refused, and hypocrites have condemned; but which was afterwards vindicated by One greater than Moses and the prophets. Had any accusation been brought against him, it ought to have been founded not on disloyalty, but on a breach of the ceremonial law.

There was present at this interview, one Doeg, a Syrian by birth, a servant of the king, and chief herdsman of his flocks. He could be no stranger to the upright behaviour of Ahimelech, and to the motives which prompted him to furnish David with the hallowed bread, and the sword of Goliath of Gath. He had probably advanced himself in the king's favour by those arts of flattery and insinuation, which, in the court of a wicked prince, are a surer road to preferment, than virtue and personal accomplishments. David was acquainted with the business of his character, and was struck at the time, with a suspicion,

picion, that he would make some fatal use of what he had seen transacted at Nob. *I knew it*, said he to Abiathar, the sole survivor of the family of Ahimelech, *I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safe-guard*.*

On his arrival at Gath, David found that the cause of all the troubles he had met with in his own country, was to endanger his life in a foreign court. The triumphal song, which Saul heard with such indignation, was repeated in the ears of Achish by his servants, and excited within him, if not the fear of a rival, the desire of revenge. David, to save himself, was therefore driven to the sad necessity of counterfeited madness, till an opportunity occurred of fleeing from that hostile land to the care of Adullam. Thither, besides his kindred, there resorted to him about four hundred

* 1 Sam. xxii. 22, 23.

men,

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men, disaffected to the government, and desperate in their fortunes, whom, in the present distressful situation of his affairs, he formed into a band. Then carrying his father and mother to Moab, he placed them under the protection of the king, and retired, with his armed followers, to the forest of Hareth.

The fame of these transactions did not escape the jealous attention of Saul. He caught a fresh alarm from them. Assembling his servants, he seated himself in Gibeon under a tree in Ramah, having a spear in his hand, and there complained, that they had conspired with his son Jonathan against him, in favouring the son of Jesse. He expostulated with them, whether they expected greater rewards and honours under the reign of David, should the arms of that rebel be successful, than what they enjoyed under his own.

Doeg, who was now promoted to be the chief of the king's servants, seized the occasion presented to him, of ingratiating himself more in his favour. He stepped forth from the throng, and accused Ahimelech,
of

of supplying David with *victuals*, and the sword of Goliath the Philistine, and of consulting the oracle of God in his behalf. Thus did he calumniate the holy, the anointed high-priest of the Almighty, the person next in dignity to the king. He brought a lying evidence against him, insinuated that his designs were treasonable, and artfully concealed the truth, that, from the firm belief of David's being employed in the king's business, Ahimelech had furnished him with what was necessary for the success of his enterprise.

These bold accusations alarmed and enraged Saul. He began to dread, that the ministers of the altar were conspiring with David to dethrone and ruin him. In the first paroxysms of his rage, he gave orders to bring instantly before him, *Ahimelech, the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were at Nob.* These venerable and innocent persons were, accordingly, dragged forth from their peaceful abode, like sheep to the slaughter; and were impeached by the king with what was laid to their charge by the Edomite.

Ahimelech

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Ahimelech made his defence with all the truth and dignity which became his sacred office. He did not deny his giving bread and the sword of the Philistine to David; but refused that *he, or the house of his father, had inquired of God* concerning the success of his undertaking; or that he knew any thing *less or more* of the matter. He had even the courage to attempt soothing the disturbed spirit of the king, and questioned him, *Who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house?*

To one who could listen to the voice of reason, this would have been a quieting and satisfactory defence; but to the angry monarch it was oil to the flame. Every word in praise of David, pierced him like a dagger to the heart. Terror and revenge quenched or assimilated to themselves his other feelings. His fury grew dreadful, and, deaf to justice and mercy, he gave orders to put Ahimelech, and all his attendants, instantly to the sword.

Curfed

*Cursed be his anger for it was fierce, and
his wrath for it was cruel*.*

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Astonished at the sacrilegious commands, the servants of the king had the courage to disobey them. In the person of their priests they revered the religion of their country, and revolted with horror from the idea of staining their hands with sacred and innocent blood. The perjured informer waited only for the word to unsheath his sword. The venerable high-priest, and fourscore and four persons that did wear a linen ephod, fell by his murderous arm. Not glutted with so direful a sacrifice, the vengeance of Saul ordered him to attack their defenceless habitations, and to destroy their wives, their children, and every thing which belonged to them. He accordingly smote Nob, the city of the priests, with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

* Gen. xlix. 7.

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Without examining, at present, any further into the motives and passions which drove the king to issue such atrocious orders, it is proposed, in what remains of this discourse, to make a few observations on the character of Doeg, who was the cause and executioner of them. Unfortunately for the peace of the world, there are too many in it who resemble him. The study of a character so deeply stained with falsehood and cruelty, is not pleasant; but if this shall lead to a discovery of the causes which conspire to form it, reflections may be drawn from the inquiry, that deserve the attention of us all, but particularly of the younger part of this audience.

There are some who, in the conduct of their lives, are governed by a principle of reason and conviction. They perceive this to be wrong, and abstain from it; and that to be right, and observe it. Their behaviour is the result of a choice, founded in integrity, and the love of virtue. Viewed in their Christian capacity, they are the servants of God, and the disciples of Him
who

who lived and died in defence of the truth.

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Others, again, act from what may be called authority, and not from conviction. Of this class, some follow implicitly, and accommodate themselves to, the established opinions, forms, and customs, of the world; some *love the praise of men, more than the praise of God*; and some rest all their hopes of success in life, in the favour of the great and opulent. These three kinds of people have a general resemblance in their character, but differ in this, that respect for the sentiments of mankind, or at least the fear of giving them offence, have much influence on the behaviour of the two first of them; whereas the latter are determined by motives entirely mercenary.

In order to gain reputation, and to secure the envied condition of independence, you may either trust in your own personal merit and talents, or you may attach yourselves to your superiors in rank and estate. If the last be your choice, and if you are resolved to seek preferment, without good

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accomplishments, by means of their patronage alone, you are beginning a course which, by necessary consequence, will give rise to a character similar to that of Doeg. The very choice itself is bad, and proceeds from baseness of thought. It is the choice of a slave, and not of a brave and independent spirit.

But whether meanness of sentiment, or laziness, or dissipation, hath projected the plan, positive vice must attend every step taken in the execution of it. The countenance of the wise and virtuous is not to be purchased by the low arts of flattery and dissimulation. Some person, therefore, must be singled out, so weak as to be easily imposed upon, or so abandoned as to have occasion for one of Doeg's disposition, to assist him in accompanying his bad designs.

Having discovered and pitched upon a person suitable to your purpose, the first measure you are obliged to adopt in prosecution of it, is to please and humour him. For this end, you must learn to dissemble. You must smile or frown, according as he

is

is well or ill disposed towards another. SERM.
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You must resign your will entirely to him, conceal your sentiments, and must often say and defend what you do not believe. You must divest yourselves altogether of truth, and speak the language of habitual duplicity. You must love what he loves, and hate what he hates. His friends must be your friends, his foes your foes, his people your people, and his god, provided he has any, must be your lord, and your god.

These are great sacrifices; but there are still greater and costlier, which you must offer up. It is not enough that you re-echo all his sentiments, and assent to his opinions, without ever contradicting him. Your zeal in his service must be active. You must distinguish yourselves, by accusing his enemies, supporting his measures, and doing his commands. Of all things you must pay close and unremitting attention to the ruling passion, *The sin which doth so easily beset him.* Master of this, you have a key by which you

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may unlock every avenue that leads to his heart. Is he a man of pleasure? assist him in ruining youth, beauty, and innocence, to gratify his sinful desires. Is he covetous? help him to defraud. Is he revengeful? be spy, informer, and backbiter, of those he hates. Stick at nothing. At his nod, lessen guilt, depreciate merit, asperse virtue. No work is too mean, and no task too villainous, to be undertaken to oblige him.

By compliances like these, the road to preferment may perhaps be laid open. The obedience of servants in matters indifferent and harmless, is a thing which every master has a right to command. A patron expects the like from those who depend upon him. There is evidently no merit in this. But to do what is wrong and dishonourable to serve him, proves a higher degree of attachment to his interest. This is giving him counsel and aid, which others would refuse to give him. It is devoting to him the love of good reputation, the restraints of shame and disgrace, a conscience silent and unremonstrating, together with the
fear

fear of punishment in this world, and in the world to come. So vast a sacrifice is surely deserving of every gracious answer, and kind return, from the being at whose shrine it is offered up.

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Such were the steps by which Doeg ascended to greatness. He had come into the land of Canaan an obscure stranger, and had ingratiated himself with Saul, by compliances which sacred history has not preserved. At the time when David fled to Nob, he was *chiefest of the herdsmen that belonged to the king* *. Now the Israelites being a nation of husbandmen and shepherds, but consisting chiefly of the latter, it is plain that the person who was appointed to preside over the stores, from whence the principal branch of the revenue was derived, must have been high in office, and in the royal favour. It appears, too, that he was a rising favourite; for when he massacred the priests, it is probable he had been first officer in the household. The historian says of him, that *he was set over the servants of*

* 1 Sam. xxi. 7.

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Saul *. Nor was the preferment of Doeg a singular case. Tyrants and profligate rich men are in use to heap profuse honours on the tools of their ambition, and the ministers of their pleasures, as long at least as they have need of their infamous services, after which they often discard, and sometimes bring them to condign punishment.

When I said, that the conscience of sinners like Doeg, is silent and unremonstrating, I spoke in too gentle terms. That which in virtuous minds is a principle of light, is in them a principle of darkness. Thus it apologises for their wickedness, and thus it reasons with them: That their patron, or their master, hath given such and such orders, and it is their duty to obey: that they are in no way concerned, whether the commission they have received to execute, be right or wrong; let him who issued it, see to that: that by their fidelity and allegiance, they are bound to tame submission and prompt execution; and, in

* 1 Sam. xxii. 9.

short,

short, that they are as innocent of any guilt contracted by what they do, as the sword which inflicts the wound, or the torch which begins the conflagration.

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In order to raise this character to the most daring and formidable pitch of atrocity, one thing only is necessary; and that is, the belief that it is incumbent upon them to obey all his orders, and perpetrate whatever crime he commands them to execute, as they hope to obtain pardon from God, and happiness in another world. History, in whose instructive volume the great virtues and great vices of mankind are recorded, hath preserved accounts of the violence and bloodshed occasioned in the world by this infernal creed. Of these, the following one, which is authenticated in the most satisfactory manner, may serve as a specimen, and is not the least memorable.

There sprang up in the east a religious society, which inhabited a country near Mount Libanus, and which was distinguished by the name of the Assassins. Their king, or chief, was called the Lord of the

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the Mountain. His subjects were trained up in the faith, that all his decrees were just and good; that they were bound to obey them implicitly, without murmuring or contradiction; that in this consisted the most meritorious of virtue, and the holiest of piety; that trouble, fatigue, danger, persecution, tortures, and death, were to be encountered in doing his will; and that paradise was to be the certain reward of their sufferings.

A community founded on such principles, with a furious and revengeful bigot at their head, scattered terror and consternation, not only among neighbouring, but distant, nations. A sentence of death, pronounced by him, was like the irrevocable decree of the fates. No distance of place, or length of time, no difficulty in executing the orders, no vigilance in the guards of the destined victim, could damp the zeal, or baffle the attempts, of these desperate emissaries. At his command they left their country, never more to return to it; and parted from kindred and friends, they were never again to see. They entered into the service

service of foreigners, studied their language and manners, conformed with their creeds and peculiarities, submitted to every hardship, and braved every peril, in order to fulfil the dire commission on which they were sent. Too often were they successful in their enterprises. Generals fell by their hands, at the head of faithful and victorious armies. Princes were murdered by them, in the sanctuaries of their palace. No person, who was an object of jealousy or revenge to *the Lord of the Mountain*, thought himself safe. The most potent monarchs, with redoubled guards, sat pensive and trembling on their throne. Unseen, like *the pestilence that walketh in darkness*, was their approach, and the dagger that struck the blow was the announcer of their presence. Hence, to this day, the jealous and vindictive murderer is branded with their national name, and is called an Affassin.

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But the unfolding this character, and tracing out the monstrous crimes it has engendered, does not belong any further to the subject of our present inquiry. Let
it

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it suffice, then, to remark, that Doeg and the Assassin consent in this opinion, that every thing is lawful in the service of their master; but they differ in this, that the one expects present riches and preferment, and the other the possession of heaven, as the reward of obedience.

Having thus taken a view of Doeg in the capacity of a servant; let us, in the next place, consider him moving in his own sphere, without being influenced by the authority of a superior.

Is it then to be supposed, that the man who, to please his sovereign, could defame, accuse, and murder the innocent, will be just and merciful to others, who are not the objects of the royal jealousy and resentments? Was it to promote Saul's interest or his own, that Doeg committed such shocking and atrocious crimes? Can change of situation render a spy honourable, or an informer true? The transmutation of the vilest earth into the most precious of metals, would be less a prodigy in the natural, than this in the moral, world. The conscience

science sold to purchase the smiles of the great, and the interest of the wealthy; is, for the most part, sold irredeemably to wickedness. One sacrifice of honour and humanity, is usually sufficient to constitute the person who presented it for ever after a villain.

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From a temper so submissive to the will of his superiors, you perhaps infer, that he will be condescending to his equals, and to those of a lower condition; interest being supposed apart. This, however, is not the case. Although history is silent concerning the behaviour of Doeg in this respect, yet, in those characters who resemble him in what is related of him, there is always found arrogance, haughtiness, and insolence. A man of this description is accordingly a troublesome neighbour, an imperious master, a harsh parent, an overbearing husband. He expects from all beneath him the servile obeisance which he pays to those of a higher rank. Caught in his own snare, he is sometimes overreached by villains more cunning than himself; and, generally meeting with disrespect

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respect from the good, with retaliation from such as he has injured, and with the distrust of society at large; he becomes sullen and discontented, thinks all men wicked, open or concealed, hardens himself in sin, till he is fit for no other society but theirs who torment and are tormented.

Saul, from the violence of his resentment, ambition, and fear of a rival, and partly from his parental anxiety to secure the throne of Israel to Jonathan, was guilty of the fatal crimes which stain the annals of his reign. Doeg, for his own mercenary purposes, first of all wound up the passions of the king to the utmost, and then perpetrated the deeds which we have described. Which of the two is stamped with the worst and blackest marks of iniquity, is a question too obvious to require any formal solution.

In the convulsions of government, and chiefly in the records of despotism, the evils occasioned in the world by such characters as we have been reviewing, are to be

be discovered. In the venal spirit of a Doeg, tyranny dates its origin, derives support, and accomplishes its ends. Who forges the chains that are imposed upon a free people, and that hold ever after in subjection their lives and properties? Not, surely, the prince, in whose name this worst of violence is committed. Would mankind have been so cruelly insulted in their liberties, and plundered of their birth-right privileges, had not the thrones of their sovereigns been beset with ministers ready to support them in all their measures, to inflame their passions, and put a sceptre of iron, and a whip of scorpions, into their hands? When this temper of passive obedience and tame submission forms a national character, the subjects are reduced to the lowest ebb of servility and abasement; where every one is disposed to do whatever the despot commands, and when even to die by his orders, is thought a passport to paradise.

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Who shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another? Was it the fierce and impious Manasseh

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nasseh alone? Who deluged imperial Rome with blood, and spread havoc and desolation over Italy and the provinces, with such cruel confiscations, proscriptions, and murders? A Caligula, a Nero, a Domitian? These monsters of iniquity acted, it is true, the principal parts in the dreadful scenes exhibited in their respective reigns; but their fears and jealousies were roused, their enmities fomented, and their decrees suggested and executed, by ministers still worse than themselves. They had their Doegs, to inspect the behaviour of those who were obnoxious to them, to whisper lying calumnies into their ears, and to impeach every one whose family or opulence were either objects of terror or rapacity. They had Doegs, to fulfil the most infamous commissions; to plunder the rich, to assassinate the wise and virtuous, and set the proud metropolis of the world in flames.

And would to God, that such bloody incendiaries had been confined to periods of anarchy and despotism! These are their proper foil, and there they grow up, rank and poisonous, to their full size. In this
favoured

favoured isle, this blessed abode of liberty, independence, and public spirit, there are not materials to rear them up to maturity. Yet it is too true, that persons are to be found, who are willing for a bribe to undertake any kind of mischief, which they dare commit with the hope of impunity; and that nothing but the want of a Saul prevents Doeg from rising again into life and action.

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Let a man have great possessions, and consequently great weight and importance, he will find himself exposed to the insidious address of sycophants. Even when employed in the occupations of quiet and inoffensive life, he will have occasion to guard against their impositions. But if he has formed any design, which requires intermediate steps of villany to accomplish it, and which, at the same time, he himself is ashamed to take, their services are fully at his devotion.

Whether the supposition here put is to be restricted to individuals, this is not the place to determine. Nothing however is

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more certain, than that mankind in a conjunct body will adopt measures, and prosecute them by such means, as no person amongst them durst singly have undertaken, or durst avow. Here, again, is opened a field for the display of the talents and vices of a Doeg. He will be their agent in what is wrong; and, should there be danger of detection, he will be bribed to fly to a distance, carrying with him, like the scape-goat to the wilderness, their sins and iniquities to the land of oblivion.

Whence often arise the causes that set man and man, family and family, I may say, even nation and nation, at variance; save the selfishness of those who hope to derive advantage from their hostilities? How many trifling differences among neighbours might be easily compromised, were there no meddling officious persons interested to inflame them into a quarrel? How frequently have the most deadly purposes of malice been effected by instruments in nowise concerned, except to promote their own ends?

David

David never injured Doeg. Ahimelech and the priests at Nob, persons precluded from the pursuits of ambition by their holy office and the laws of Moses, could not hurt the rising fortune of that sanguinary minion. Should this be doubted, yet surely their aged fathers, their wives, their children, their sucklings, were innocent, whose blood he shed remorseless at the command of Saul.

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But it is enough. Let me take leave of this ungrateful subject, with offering to the younger part of my audience a few practical directions from what has been said.

My beloved brethren, allow me on this occasion to address you as distinguishable into two classes; the rich and independent, on the one hand; and those, on the other, whose success in the world is to depend on your own merit, and on the improvements you are now to make in useful knowledge.

I. As to you of the first description, whom indulgent Providence hath placed in a condition of opulence, nothing is of greater consequence to the improvement expected

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from a liberal education, and to your figure, importance, and happiness in life, than a judicious choice of the companions of your youth. Your age is strongly susceptible of impressions. The tone of your sentiments, and the general cast of your mind, will be taken from those with whom you principally associate. Beware, then, not only of such as are notoriously bad, but likewise of the smooth, simpering, insinuating, sycophant. He will steal into your good opinion, by all the fawning compliances in his power. He will praise your wit, magnify your rank, and pretend the highest personal regard for you. If such fair appearances of regard impose so often upon the wise, is it matter of wonder that they should ensnare those of your unsuspicious and unexperienced years?

But you ask, by what touchstone are you to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the pretended, friend?

I answer, Be on your guard against flattery. If any one scruples not to do a bad thing to oblige you, if he encourages
you

you in the neglect of your studies; in the contempt of your teachers, or in any thing profligate and debauched; take these as marks he belongs to the family of Doeg. You have every thing hurtful to your education, and dangerous to your honour and future prospects, to fear from him. He will corrupt your principles, inveigle you into low company, and beguile you into excesses that will consume your time, and impair your constitution. By initiating you into the black mysteries of gaming, he will inspire you with a taste which may afterwards reduce you to beggary. He will inure you to the company of the idle and dissipated, of cheats and sharpers. He will thus disappoint the fond hopes of your parents, and blast the promising fruits of your earlier years. And, whilst he takes his own advantage of your folly, he will involve you in such courses, and form in you such unworthy habits, as will render you infamous, however high your rank, and opulent your fortune may be.

You are liable to greater danger from this quarter, if you have been too much

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indulged in your infancy, and have learned from this to be positive and headstrong, impatient of contradiction, and deaf to reproof. Young men of wisdom and application will shun your company, the good will despise you, and none of a liberal and aspiring mind will countenance you. Are you to imagine, that such will forfeit the pleasures arising from innocence, science, and friendship, which they enjoy in the society of one another, for your insignificant acquaintance; or bestow their time on objects so entirely beneath their notice? No. Avoided by the virtuous, you will become an easy prey of the false and designing.

Be, therefore, greatly cautious whom you select for your companions, and admit into your friendship. When you have occasion for the advice of others, take care that you place into proper hands so sacred a deposit as the direction of your conduct. Cultivate a habitual love for truth and honour. This will deter the bad from courting your acquaintance, and will lay the foundation of virtuous friendship.

Above

Above all, be unremitting and industrious in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and fill up your time as becomes your professional situation; and the idle, who are usually the vicious, will not encroach upon you.

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Cultivate a regard for religion, and be not caught with the prevailing infection of treating it with contempt. There is nothing in Christianity, properly understood, that is the just object of ridicule and dislike, but of the highest love and reverence. The end it proposes is, to make us wise and good, to purify our nature, to inspire us with an abhorrence of every thing dishonourable and wicked, to render us happy here, and to qualify us for partaking of that *salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

II. My young brethren of the other description, if the picture of Doeg this day exhibited before you fill you with indignation, as I hope it will, beware of the vices by which he rose to greatness. What is so detestable as a spy and in-

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former? What is so base, as to sacrifice every principle of duty and feeling of humanity to arrive at preferment through the favour of another? Grant that, like Doeg, you should be successful, a thing by the bye extremely precarious, yet what comforts can arise from advantages bought at so dreadful a price?

Adorn yourselves with that loftiness of sentiment which scorns to stoop to any thing ignominious, in order to please the noblest or the richest patron. Purchase no man's favour at the expence of probity and truth. Blacken no character to exalt your own. If you are to attach yourselves to a superior, let honour and virtue form the basis of all which you say or do to secure his regard.

It is however a far higher ambition to seek for applause and independence by your own sterling merit alone. Recommend yourselves to encouragement by amiable dispositions, upright principles, and useful talents. Strive to be eminent in that profes-

profession of which you make choice: SERM.
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without zeal and ardour, and, let me add, without steadiness and perseverance, you will never excel. The event does not belong to you. All which God requires is, to do your best, and to occupy properly the talents which he has bestowed upon you. Should your virtuous labours be unsuccessful, and unfortunate times and chances happen to you, you will have the satisfaction to reflect, that the fault is not in yourselves; and have sure grounds to expect, that your neglected merit will be brought to light, and receive in heaven that recompense it missed here below.

Be it therefore your principal care, to *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*; to obey his commandments, and to abstain from every thing which he has forbidden. In the words of our Saviour: *Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind: for all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek*

SERM. *seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these*
 XIV. *things shall be added to you *.*

And may God of his infinite mercy grant, that you may be all kept from the bad example and seductions of a wicked world; that you may improve in all which is praise-worthy, useful, and excellent; and that, as you increase in years, you may *increase in wisdom, and in favour with God and man*; and to his holy name be ascribed, glory, honour, majesty, and praise, for ever. Amen.

• Luke, xii. 29—31.

S E R M O N XV.

On a Well- and an Ill-spent Youth.

ECCLES. XI. 9, 10.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.

XII. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

YOUTH is the proper season for acquiring useful accomplishments, and forming virtuous habits. There is a docility and

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and softness then in our nature, which, like the wax to which it has been compared, renders it susceptible of strong and lasting impressions. It is, at the same time, lively, cheerful, and vigorous, free of that indolence, and those tormenting cares, which, according to our situation and trials in the world, are so ready to encroach upon us, as we advance in years. It stands less in need of the spur, than of a prudent management, to guide and employ its activity to the best advantage. The generous affections, the candour and native ingenuity of the heart, are not injured by the corrupt principles, and bad examples, that abound so much in the society of our fellow-creatures. Sensibility to honour and disgrace, is not blunted by vice. There are no wicked habits to be undone, which are the chief preventive of reformation, in those accustomed to do evil, and grown up in life. The field of action is clear, and every thing is favourable for the cultivation of our moral and religious powers.

What the morning is to the rest of an important day, and what the spring is to the

the year, the state of youth is to manhood. On the improvements made in that early period of our lives, the harvest of age entirely depends. If we sow to folly and vice, we must eat the bitter grapes of misery; if we sow to wisdom and virtue, we shall reap the joyful fruits of honour, peace, and self-approbation.

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The writings of Solomon are full of many excellent observations upon this interesting and important subject. In search of his beloved wisdom, he traced out the respective consequences of an early piety, and of a mispent youth, with great justness and discernment. He begins the book of Proverbs, professing it to be his design to impart instruction to the simple, to give wisdom to the unexperienced, and to teach *the young man knowledge and discretion*. In Ecclesiastes, a book seemingly written at a more advanced period of his life, after having described, at considerable length and with much feeling, the vanity of all sublunary enjoyments, and the vexations and disappointments we meet with in pursuit

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of happiness, he concludes with admonishing youth to beware of those follies and vices, which bring the judgments of God upon them; and to *remember their Creator* before infirmities and old age benumb their faculties, and *the dust return to the earth as it was.*

It is proposed, in the following discourse, in the first place, to lay before you a description of a well- and an ill-spent youth; in the second place, to point out the advantages of the one, and the miseries flowing from the other: lastly, to enforce the motive to an early remembrance of God, taken by Solomon from the consideration of the sufferings of old age, and the approach of death.

I. I am to lay before you a description of a well- and an ill-spent youth.

In general, they who employ the time of their youth in the improvement of their active powers, and in the acquisition of virtuous habits, *remember their Creator*; whereas they who pass it in idleness and
vice,

vice, may be said to *walk in the ways of* SERM.
their heart, and in the sight of their eyes. XV.

By what means, then, are these powers to be improved, and those habits to be acquired? In order to solve this question, by far the most important of any that can engage the attention of youth, it will be proper to subdivide the first head of discourse into these two parts: first, to consider a state of youth as spent in industry, or in idleness: secondly, as spent in the exercise of virtue, or in wicked pursuits. The former of these inquiries will lead to the knowledge of what is necessary to the cultivation, or causes the neglect, of the *understanding*; the latter, what promotes the cultivation, or occasions the depravation, of the *heart*.

1. Let us first consider a state of youth as spent in industry, or in idleness; and what is necessary to the culture and improvement of the *understanding*.

The human powers do not arrive at their perfection in a stated and given time, like those

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those of brute creatures. If this were the case, mankind would be all upon a level in point of abilities and understanding, for the same reason that the sagacity of any particular class of animals is equal. Their figure and success in life, accidental misfortunes and extraordinary contingencies being excepted, would be the same. Nothing personal or distinctive could occasion that vast difference which exists at present among individuals. The character of one man would have been the character of his species, and one man's talents the universal standard.

We appear all at first in the same helpless state and condition. The instinct, by which infants are guided in taking their nourishment, is as uniform and universal in its operation, as those by which irrational creatures are directed in the preservation of the individual, and in the continuation of the kind. We have all the same nature. We are all endued with the same powers and faculties, with the same appetites, passions, and desires. *God hath made*

of

of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell SERM.
on all the face of the earth. We are all XV.
sprung from the same stock and parentage,
and are all made in the same image.

There are two general causes which give rise to the inequality so observable among mankind, as they advance in years. The first of these, is superiority in external situation. One man is born in a civilised country, another among savages or barbarians; their knowledge, their sentiments moral and religious, their manners and habits of life, must, therefore, be entirely different. Of those again born among an improved people, some, like you my young brethren, enjoy the invaluable opportunity of liberal education, and adorning their minds with science and the wisdom of past ages: whereas others, by poverty, mean parentage, and other causes, are doomed to ignorance, and trained up in low sentiments, and in a still lower course of behaviour.

The second is entirely personal; so that of two men placed in the same circumstances

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stances and situation, and possessing the same advantages in regard to cultivating themselves, the one shall turn out learned, wise, and accomplished, and the other illiterate, foolish, and void of all talents useful or ornamental.

This phenomenon was too curious and important to escape notice. It was observed, and various hypotheses were adopted to account for it. The desire of ascribing certain occult and incomprehensible qualities, supposed to exist in nature, as the causes of things, prevailed, on this occasion, in the decisions of the learned. This manner of explaining appearances, which has been the disgrace and retardment of science in all ages, proved, as usual, unsatisfactory. Some had recourse to astrology, attributing extraordinary influences to the day, the hour, and even the place, of our nativity; and to the stars that, in their conjunctions and oppositions, were fancied to have presidency at that time. Some denied the reality and existence of a spiritual substance within us, and endeavoured to resolve into the fineness of the nerves, the sensibility

sensibility and acuteness of the animal spirits, the better temperament of the blood, not to add the firmer contexture of the grosser parts of the body, all the superiorities possessed by one person over another. Others, discarding the body out of their system, rested their solution of the difficulties in question, on a certain innate constitutional pre-eminence of soul, distributed in various degrees, and even in various kinds, to some, and withheld in like manner from others, which they call by the consecrated name of *genius*.

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There are others who reject all these hypotheses, as being equally founded on the same false and imaginary grounds. They insist that all the inequalities which appear among mankind may be simply accounted for, from the different use they make of their powers, according to the condition in which they are placed. They contend, that as the astrological and materialist systems are absurd, so the last, which is the popular and prevalent supposition, is attended with consequences so manifestly pernicious, and so discouraging to every

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ambitious hope and spirited exertion, as to afford, on that account, strong presumptions that the foundation on which it is reared is altogether sandy, although it may be impossible for them to prove it so. They therefore lay it aside together with the rest, and consider *industry*, that is, they consider the proper culture of our faculties, and the vigorous, persevering, and well-applied use of them to the purposes of life, as the sole cause of superiority and excellence.

It is entirely foreign to the design of this discourse to examine on what principles, and by what arguments, these several opinions are supported, or to adopt and defend any one of them, and attempt to refute the rest. Permit me, however, to suggest to you, that the idea that genius has a great, if not an entire, dependence on diligence and application, is extremely proper for youth, eager in the pursuit of knowledge, and ambitious to distinguish themselves in the world, to embrace. Such a persuasion can do no harm, and has a manifest tendency to sweeten the fatigue of study, and to in-
spire

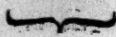
spire them with hopes of honour and success. Taking for granted, but by no means asserting, that it is justly founded, let us hear what the advocates of this hypothesis have to advance in defence of it.

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It is evident, say they, that the ordinary supposition regarding genius is ill-calculated for cherishing that spirit of virtuous emulation, which those, intelligent in the education of youth, are so keen to awake and preserve alive within them.

Some, fancying that they enjoy this in-born pre-eminence of mind, infer that they have little occasion for exerting themselves in the acquisition of knowledge. Nature, they think, has smiled so propitious on their birth, and has done so much for them, that they may leave the drudgery of thought and laborious application to the stupid and insensible.

A far more numerous class err in the worse extreme, of imagining that they are altogether destitute of genius. This creates in them a diffidence which hinders them from making the proper use and im-

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provement of their powers. They become dull, negligent, and dispirited. Their activity either flags, or diverts itself into channels prejudicial to their true interest, and destructive of the ends proposed to be obtained by their education.

A third class, without placing confidence in their genius, or believing that they are void of it, have recourse to the latter of these suppositions, as an apology for their idleness and dissipation. They deny that moral or intellectual excellence increases in proportion to the industry and exertions of individuals. The granting such a position, would argue in them a defect in the cultivation of their minds, which they ought to have supplied. If the temperature of the blood, or the delicacy of the nervous system, or certain latent qualities of the soul, be the cause of genius, they are not to be blamed, because they are not so well informed and accomplished as those who enjoy them. But if labour and severe application be the real source from whence it is derived, then the fault is charge-

chargeable upon themselves, and they only are responsible for the want of it.

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Upon the whole they conclude, that the wise and judicious improvement of his faculties, is a good reason why one man excels another who is negligent, idle, and slothful; and that a superior degree of industry, sufficiently accounts for a superior degree of perfection.

It is no objection, they allege, to this reasoning, that some have less merit, and fewer accomplishments, than others who labour with much seeming pains and assiduity. A man may plod and drudge, without employing much real activity of mind. Another may be very diligent, and yet shift so frequently from one object of pursuit to another, that it is impossible for him to excel in any of them. But he who, making choice of a proper end, applies the whole force of his mind to obtain it, and who, at the same time, continues steadfast in his resolution, must surely be more successful than the lukewarm or the unstable.

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They further argue, that all our faculties are weak at first, that they grow strong by being exerted, and are capable of enlargement according to the manner they are employed, and the use to which they are put. Their perfection and excellence have as certain a dependence upon the right management of them, as the luxuriancy of a crop upon the judicious cultivation of the land, and the goodness of the season. The memory improves by exercising it, the judgment ripens by vigorous application, and taste is acquired by a long and patient inquiry into the source of what is beautiful and sublime: whereas indolence and sloth relax every nerve, unbend the natural spring of our activity, and enfeeble the whole mind.

When those works, by which our intellectual abilities display themselves, are examined, such of them as command the applause of mankind are found to be the result of deep thought and research. Analyse their component parts, or view them combined, and forming a regular whole; and

and marks of design, labour, and patience, are every where apparent in them. SERM.
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The facility with which they seem to have been executed, is advanced by the ignorant and superficial, as a proof of some original superiority of mind in their authors. This facility, however, is only to be obtained by practice. The first attempts of the greatest masters were rude, their workmanship was at first imperfect. They arrived at their excellence by slow degrees, by persevering zeal, and by long and severe application. Their unconquerable industry surmounted every obstacle in their way, rendered each successive attempt less difficult, gave them greater and greater dexterity, till they reached that ease and expertness of execution which strike the world with wonder and admiration.

But laying this idea, upon which we are reasoning, altogether aside, the cause of industry may be supported by strong arguments, whatever hypothesis be adopted concerning the cause of genius. If the powers of the understanding be different in different minds, yet in no instance are these powers

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powers bestowed upon us in a state of perfection, nor do they ripen to it by the lapse of time alone. On the contrary, the greater they are, there is the more occasion to be diligent and active in the cultivation of them. It is surely more difficult to improve ten talents properly, than to improve one; so that the demand for industry and application, instead of being diminished by the greater extent of genius, is enlarged in proportion to it. That which our Saviour has observed, speaking of the culture of our moral powers, is applicable to that of our intellectual faculties; *That unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,*

Thus, if we have the noble ambition to aspire at excellence, we are laid under the indispensable necessity of exerting ourselves to the utmost, whether we suppose that our minds are originally the same or not. Diligence will exalt superior powers; but idleness and dissipation will ruin the finest abilities. The man of genius, who allows his faculties to remain neglected and unimproved, or to run waste through indolence, will

will be surpassed by the person who, with lesser talents, leaves nothing undone to occupy them aright. Renown is not the child of repose; the race is not won without strenuous exertion; nor does victory reserve her laurels for the careless and the inactive.

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Intellectual merit, then, is not a birth-right; privilege is not an emanation merely from on high, nor is to be purchased with ease. No. It is the fruit of thought, diligence, fatigue, and perseverance. At the same time, it deserves carefully to be remembered, that this merit is not to be produced by every kind of activity. There are many objects which, in their attainment, give us sufficient employment, without improving us. The soul, exercised in great and good matters, becomes great and good; but is debased when her attention is fixed upon what is low and groveling.

It is not, therefore, enough that you be busy and active; your industry must be of that quality, and be directed on such objects, as may enable you to act a wise
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and useful part in life. From the ignorance, or the contempt, of these truths, a great many pass the days of their youth in folly and vanity.

Of those who are born in a situation of riches and independence, some are apt to place their confidence entirely in them. They suppose that these will supply the want of personal merit, will atone for their follies, and give them all the weight and importance in society which they desire. They not only neglect, but despise, the education necessary to improve their minds. Instead of preserving alive, and cherishing, the sparks of ambition natural to a young person, they extinguish them entirely within their breast. The pleasures of the present hour engrossing wholly their attention, they never extend their views beyond it, nor ponder the consequences of their behaviour; and therefore they are at no pains to qualify themselves for acting a worthy part in it.

You may indeed command, without being adorned with any useful accomplishments, that kind of respect which courtesy
has

has allotted to your rank. You may be saluted in places of public resort, may fill the chief seats at a feast, and may receive from hirelings and expectants the most servile adulation. This is granted; but carry home to your bosom the mortifying consideration, that not to your own proper self, but to your title and wealth, all this outward deference is paid. He who values himself merely on this account, is like the vain bird in the fable, who decked itself in beautiful feathers not its own, and was therefore treated with scorn. Nobility of birth and great riches belong not to the man, but to the representative of a family, and the heir of a great estate. It is not in these that his glory is placed. His intrinsic value is to be estimated from the improvement he makes of his powers and opportunities, from his virtuous habits, and his capacity of being useful.

Of the far more numerous class, whose success in the world depends upon themselves, and whose situation, consequently, calls so loud for judicious and spirited exertion, there are some so inconsiderate, as to addict

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themselves to pleasure, and neglect their education. The consequence is, they meet with shame and discouragement; and, not being able to provide for themselves, become a cruel and vexatious load upon all nearly connected with them.

Others make choice of improper objects of pursuit; either such as are unsuitable to their station, or trifling in their nature. In the acquisition of unproductive talents, they toil, drudge, and consume their time. They are neither positively vicious, nor slothful. But they are active to no purpose, and *spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.* Their youth is spent in vanity. They arrive at the state of manhood disqualified for acting a part of any utility to themselves, their friends, or the community to which they belong. The fruits of their misapplied industry are bitterness and vexation of spirit.

Others, by flattery and dishonourable services, attach themselves to companies of superior rank and opulence, in order to rise

in the world by their means, and not by SERM.
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their own merit and abilities. To what I have already advanced upon this subject, allow me to add, that a connection formed betwixt selfishness on the one hand, and vice and weakness on the other, cannot be of long duration. It has in it the principles of dissolution. Virtue, the only stable and permanent bond of union, has no share in preserving it. The tie which binds it together, is easily unloosened, and is succeeded with disgust, if not with hatred and animosity. He who confides in the smiles of the great alone, who neglects to fit and accomplish himself for making his way in life, and who has no resources within himself, leans upon a reed which has broken under thousands and ten thousands.

Some fix upon a plan that is commendable and well-laid, and are not void of activity to carry it into accomplishment; who yet, from an instability and variable-ness of temper, change their mind, adopt other measures, and desist, before they have made any progress in it.

Others,

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Others, last of all, take their aim at so many attainments, and divert their labour and application into so many channels, that they are perfect in nothing. They may acquire much superficial knowledge, and many shadowy talents. At a distance they appear like the clouds, in brilliant colours and definable shapes; approach near to them, they are mist and emptiness. *Unstable as water*, these children of Reuben *shall never excel.*

Upon the whole, then, we infer, that a wise and judicious choice, centered upon one object, together with steadiness, courage, and perseverance, in our endeavours to gain possession of it, are requisite in those who would desire to *remember their Creator in the days of their youth.*

From what has been said, it is hoped that the necessity of a well-directed and unremitting application to the improvement of our intellectual powers, is sufficiently apparent. Without this no useful knowledge can be learned, and no talents for active life obtained. What vast difficulties

enties have been overcome, what conquests have been achieved, and what mighty works have been done by means of it, let those conversant in the history of great and illustrious persons attest. Upon all of every age and condition, but chiefly on those who are in the season of youth, this necessity, if they are desirous to act that part and discharge those duties which are incumbent upon them, is obligatory.

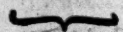
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I therefore entreat you, my young brethren of this audience, to ponder and lay to heart the instructions delivered at present to you, on a point of the utmost consequence to your honour, prosperity, and happiness. You are members of this learned and respectable society, for the professed purpose of qualifying yourselves for the more liberal and important departments of life. You are placed in a state of particular trial and discipline. Education is a test of intellectual merit, and distinguishes the wise among you from the thoughtless and inconsiderate; as religion, in an analogous way, is a touchstone by which moral excellence

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is discovered. It affords the noble opportunity for such spirits as aspire to glory and honour, to rise above their fellows, and puts a mark of infamy on the slothful, the dissipated, the unstable, and those *who set at nought the counsel and reproof of wisdom.*

It ought, therefore, to be your highest ambition, and chief concern, to employ the days of your youth in the acquisition of such habits, and in the improvement of those powers, as will render you useful in the several stations you are hereafter to occupy in society. So may your virtuous labours be crowned with success; so may the fond hopes of your parents be gratified; so may your country be benefited by you, and *your Creator be remembered.* The time which is lost in idleness, or thrown away in useless activity, can never be redeemed. Each successive period of your lives will have sufficient cares and occupations of its own, without being incumbered with the severe task of retrieving the errors of a mispent youth.

Listen

Listen then to the voice of Wisdom, and turn you at her reproof: behold, she will pour out her spirit upon you, and will make known her words unto you. But if you will have none of her counsel, and despise all her reproof; she also will laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh. Therefore shall you eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto her, shall dwell in safety, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil.*

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• Prov. ch. i.

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On a Well- and an Ill-spent Youth.

ECCLES. XI. 9, 10.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity.

XII. 1. *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*

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HAVING thus endeavoured to demonstrate, that industry is essential to the perfection of the powers that belong to the under-

understanding, let us proceed, in the next place, to point out the necessity of cultivating our moral faculties, especially in the days of our youth.

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Something upon this head has been anticipated in the former discourse. The improvement of our intellectual powers is necessarily attended with a certain degree of virtuous exertion, with a certain degree of prudence, resolution, and perseverance; whereas the neglect of them is accompanied with vice, or, to speak more properly, is wickedness itself. The slothful and unprofitable servant, who *went and hid his talent in the earth*, had it taken from him by his master, and was *cast into outer darkness, where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth* *.

This being allowed, it does not follow as a consequence from it, that an intelligent head is always united with virtuous dispositions, and a good heart. They are too often disjoined; and in that case, the more a man knows, and the greater his abilities

* Matt. xxv. 24—30.

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are, the worse he is in himself, and the more dangerous to society. The power of doing mischief, as well as of doing good, and therefore the capacity of our being miserable, as well as of being happy, is enlarged in proportion to the sphere of our activity. In order, then, to follow the advice of Solomon in the text, we must pay the same, if not much higher, attention, to the culture of our moral, as to that of our intellectual faculties.

God hath not only conferred upon us a rational, but likewise a moral nature; so that, independent of all political institutions, and of every revelation he has been graciously pleased to give of his will, we are a law unto ourselves. At a very early period of our existence, a sense of duty is felt, and the outlines of virtue are discerned by us. But these moral perceptions, like the other parts of our constitution, have their infantine state. They are feeble at first, gather strength from their being properly exercised, and arrive at a certain degree of perfection by the continued

tinued performance of those actions to which they incite us.

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The mere knowledge of our duty, and the feeling of right sentiments, do not therefore constitute what is called *virtue*, or obedience to God; neither do they infer any merit. They are distinctive of, and essential to, our kind. God hath inscribed upon the tables of our heart, what he willeth us to do, and what to forbear. He hath given us the capacity of perceiving intuitively the distinction betwixt right and wrong, and, at the same time, of feeling the obligations arising from it, to conform our behaviour to his holy will.

But neither is this feeling, nor the desire of doing our duty, without the actual performance of it, meritorious. The perception of what is virtuous and incumbent upon us to act, is always attended, till habits in vice have become inveterate, with this desire. No man loves sin at first, for its own sake. We would all wish to be just and humane, and to gain our purpose by fair, rather than by dishonourable means.

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But in what consists the righteousness of such a wish, if riches, ambition, or the love of guilty pleasures, can induce us to be cruel and insincere? That we admire what is holy and generous, and despise every thing mean and selfish, is the gift of our Creator. These are original sentiments, common to the whole of our species. They are felt by the good and the bad, by Jews, Gentiles, and Christians. They are therefore no proof of personal merit, except when they appear, which is their final cause, in the tenor of our lives and conversation.

For the same reason, the fits of self-disapprobation and remorse, that succeed a guilty action, are of no value, except they are instrumental in preventing us from committing the like again. They are not restricted to individuals, but affect all mankind. They are the penalty of a broken law, inflicted upon us, by means of our own wonderful frame. If, however, notwithstanding the shame and grief excited by them, we continue to repeat the like, or fall into other sins, our conduct is displeasing

pleasing to God. Producing no reformation in our manners, they are only a mockery of his authority. Instead of being of any spiritual benefit to us, they operate in a contrary direction. They weaken our moral sensibilities, blunt them more and more, till at last conscience, *seared*, as it were, *with a hot iron*, ceases any longer to remonstrate.

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Thus we conclude, that neither the perception of our duty, neither the inclination to perform it, nor repentance without amendment, are in the least meritorious. The *remembrance of our Creator* consisteth not in such, except when they produce their proper fruits, and appear in those acts which they ought to occasion. The repetition of these acts forms habits, and fixed and regular habits in them constitute a virtuous character.

We are to consider the passions, appetites, affections, and various principles of action, as the *talents* bestowed upon us by God, of which an account is to be demanded at the last judgment. He gave
us,

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us, for example, brotherly love, in order to render us social, friendly, and compassionate. He gave us the desire of glory and renown, that we might surmount the difficulties to which we are exposed in this probationary state. He inspired us with a regard to truth and honour, and with an aversion at falsehood, that we might be sincere and upright. He furnished us with those sentiments which constitute the love of God, that we might lead a life of piety and holiness.

But it is not the man who feels pity for the sufferings of another, and who, having it in his power, gives him no assistance, but he who, in like circumstances, contributes to his relief, that is the compassionate person. It is not the man who, in times of peace and tranquillity, speaks loudly of courage, but he who bravely encounters danger, and strives to overcome it, that is the hero. It is not the man who exhibiteth fine pictures of truth, and even perceives their beauty, but he who scorns to tell a lie upon any temptation whatever, that

that is blessed with the lip void of guile. SERM.
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It is not the noisy, the ostentatious, the professing hypocrite, but he who makes it as his meat and drink to do the will of God, that is his pious and devout worshipper.

In short, no feelings, however good, that remain unexercised, no love of virtue that does not influence practice, no refinement in morals and religion without works, are of any avail in forming that character which is to act a worthy part in this world, and to inherit life everlasting in the world to come. The reasoning of St. James against speculative faith, may be urged with equal justice against unproductive sentiment; or, if we may be allowed to use the expressions, against passive and speculative feeling.

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath a sense of his duty, and have not works? Can that sense of duty save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace; be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them

SERM. *them not those things which are needful*
 XVI. *to the body, what doth it profit? Even so,*
the perception and desire of doing our duty,
if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.
Yea, a man may say, Thou hast this sense,
and I have works; shew me thy knowledge
and sense of duty without thy works, and I
will shew thee my sense of it, by my works.
But know, O vain man, that as the body,
without the spirit, is dead, so all sentiment,
moral and religious, all passive wishes, de-
sires, and love of holiness, without works,
are dead also.*

It would appear, then, from this argument, that there is no less demand for care and activity, in the cultivation of our moral, than of our intellectual, abilities. We may say more. As the practice of virtue is far more difficult than the exercise of any art, trade, or profession whatever; so higher exertions of mind are necessary to form in us virtuous habits, than to acquire talents for business. What from the force and irregularity of the passions and appetites, what from the contagion of bad example,

* Jam. ii. 14-16.

and

and what from the principles of wickedness too prevalent in the world, those who aspire to excel in holiness must put forth all their might. They have occasion for prudence, which founds her edifice on a rock; for foresight, that weighs in the balance of futurity the value and importance of human action; for watchfulness, that never sleeps; for courage, that fears no danger in a good cause; and for constancy and fidelity, which will defend that cause to the end.

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There are times, besides, when we are called to the discharge of the duties which belong to our several stations in life; and there are hours, days, and seasons of rest from them. But there is no pause in the religious course. In the closet and in the field; in amusement and business; in silence, in speech, and in action, there is constant need for guarding against temptation, and for doing good. Independence and old age emancipate from the fatigue of mental exertion, and from the bondage of corporeal labour. But every period of our existence, and particularly the inestimable

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timable season of youth, requires the exercise, the continued and uninterrupted exercise, of all the virtues and graces of the spirit. It is then the foundations of what is excellent in character are laid, or those bad habits are contracted, which prove the cause, time and accident excepted, of the worst disappointments, disgraces, and miseries, that we afterwards meet with in life.

To enumerate the duties peculiarly incumbent upon youth to observe, and to point out the habits which they ought to form, and those they ought to avoid, were to enter upon a field too extensive to be comprehended within the bounds of this discourse. It would have been proper to have explained unto you, the obligations of filial piety, the importance of truth, the beauty of modesty and of gentleness, the felicity of meekness and of preserving in due subordination the resentful passions, the blessing of mercy, and the sweets of affection and friendship. But I must rest satisfied at present with having shown, that moral worth is placed in *action*, and not in
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the mere perception of our duty, and the passive sense of our obligation to perform it. SERM.
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They who *remember their Creator in the days of their youth*, are such as *keep his commandments*; such as not only know, but delight in doing his pleasure; who are influenced with a practical regard for religion, and behave as becomes those who are to be responsible to him for the deeds done in the body.

Allow me only to observe, that without *docility*, you have no reason to expect that the trouble and expence bestowed upon your education will be crowned with success. If you are already too wise to be instructed, and too self-sufficient and conceited to listen to the voice of wisdom, and the important admonitions of your teachers, you must remain in ignorance, and walk in the ways of your own heart, and in the sight of your own eyes. A presumptuous and untractable disposition is not fitted to receive instruction. It is the stony and stubborn soil, on which good seed being sown, is entirely lost, never producing fruit.

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But docility, which is ornamental to every character, imparts peculiar grace and comeliness to youth. It is suitable to the inexperience of that age. It is allied to gentleness and modesty, and is expressive of a temper desirous to excel. When connected, as it usually is, with diligence and application, it gives every advantage to him who is eager to acquire reputation, and to derive benefit from the profession in which he is engaged. The youth who lendeth a ready and patient ear to instruction, will become wiser and better every day; will be confirmed in what is right, and reclaimed from what is faulty and erroneous. His time is employed in treasuring up knowledge, in learning proper rules of life and manners, and preparing himself to act a virtuous and useful part in the world.

I shall conclude my remarks on this head with the admonition, that, next to your studying to obtain possession of active and righteous talents, it ought to be your chief care, to beware of contracting habits

which are bad. It is even of the utmost consequence that you be never guilty of any *one* mean and dishonourable deed. This will leave so foul a stain upon your character, as is seldom to be washed away by length of time, or expiated by repentance. The man who has a good reputation to maintain, feels, in his sense of honour, a very powerful motive to behave agreeably to the public expectations and his own. He who has justly forfeited the esteem of others, and who is conscious to himself that he is a villain, is generally lost for ever.

Vicious principles, when once permitted to occupy a place in our heart, strike deep root, soon become rank and strong, and cannot be eradicated without the greatest difficulty. But the virtues are of a delicate nature; they require a kindly and uniform cultivation; and when they suffer violence in the beginning of our days, seldom renew their honours, but droop, wither, and fade away.

II. I shall now proceed to point out the advantages of early wisdom, and the

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miseries

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miseries flowing from a youth spent in
vanity and sin.

He, who has devoted the beginning of his days to the acquisition of sound knowledge and valuable talents, and to the purposes of self-government and virtue, enters upon the stage of life, and into the state of manhood, with every reasonable prospect of success. His first impressions, and those generally are of all others the most strong and lasting, are good. His conduct, as far as he has advanced in life, has been wise, and his manners irreproachable. He hath passed through the most difficult and trying period of our present existence with applause. He hath *laid aside every weight*, and begun his course with prudence, alacrity, and resolution. He hath not the sorrowful and difficult task of retrieving the errors of an ill-spent youth to undertake. He has no wicked habits to undo, and no time wasted in folly to ransom. The future has nothing to occupy it, but its own proper cares and business. All the duties of youth were discharged in their season, without imposing
any

any load or incumbrance on the years that
are to come.

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He hath planted his vineyard, to borrow an eastern allusion, he hath carefully fenced it round, and walled it in. He hath rooted out each weed and cumbersome tree, and stored it with choice vines. The labour of the spring has been employed to the best advantage; the summer shines propitious: every thing promises a rich and plenteous increase in autumn.

Not so is the garden of the sluggard, which Solomon thus describes: *I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come, as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man*.*

* Prov. xxiv. 30-34.

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To be more particular: 1. He that comes into action master of his discipline, and full of ardour, enjoys the approbation of his own mind. Pleasant and comfortable are the reflections which arise within him on reviewing his past behaviour. He grows pale at the mention of no fault; he fears no evil; his conscience, void of offence towards God and man and himself, upbraideth him not. His prospects into futurity are bright and encouraging. The sense that he has acquitted himself with honour and fidelity hitherto, inspires him with the promising hope of success in his undertakings, and fills him with peace and gladness.

How different from these are the views and feelings of the person who has spent his youth in idleness and vice; especially if he occupies a station dependent on his own good conduct and personal qualifications, for all the prosperity he is to expect in the world: he is grieved for the worthless and insignificant part he has acted, and bitterly laments the time which he has irretrievably lost. He sees himself outstripped by those,

those, with whom he ought to have been upon a level in talents and capacity, and knows he is unfit to discharge the duties he is now called upon to perform. This disgraceful inability shocks and mortifies him. He goes into life, like a coward unskilled in the use of arms to battle. He foresees certain dishonour and discomfiture before him. These painful sentiments render some of this description desperate, and drive them into the excesses of profligacy and wickedness, till they are entirely ruined. They make others of them have recourse to mean occupations and illiberal arts for bread, or subject them to the miserable drudgery of attempting the work at noon, which ought to have been finished in the morning.

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2. The plans of divine Providence are so constituted, that, in general, idleness and vice meet with discouragement, whereas diligence and virtue are rewarded, in this state of things.

If a man be either destitute of useful talents, or be so lazy and dissipated that he

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will not exercise them, he is not fit to be employed in any active and important station. His friends and relations may perhaps endeavour to advance him; and are accordingly the first who suffer trouble from his ignorance and incapacity. But the rest of mankind, instead of shewing him countenance, avoid having any business or connection with him. The consequence is, that if he be dependent, he must either fall into poverty, or subsist, like the sluggish drone, on the industry and wealth of others. As his youth was spent in vanity, so his life, ever after, is a life of shame and misery.

If he is possessed of activity and abilities, and yet puts them to a bad use, he has far less reason to expect to thrive in the world. The slothful may sometimes be pitied, but mankind are combined against the deceitful and unjust. It is true, that by deep-laid plans of guile, by courting the favour of the great, either as ministers of their oppression or their debauchery, by holy pretenses and Pharisaic arts, and by other infamous means,

means, some have acquired riches. But SERM.
dearly are they purchased at the price of XVI.
their honour, their conscience, the peace
of their mind, and the favour of God. For
the most part, however, the attempts made
to arrive at independence by villany and
disgraceful compliances prove abortive.
Were we to examine the black catalogue
of human vices and follies, and to trace
out their natural and respective conse-
quences, we should find that to each of
them some punishment or another is ap-
propriated; that where this does not hap-
pen, the cases are mere exceptions to a
general law; and, upon the whole, that
God *brings into present judgment*, those who,
in the days of their youth, walk in the ways
of their heart.

But such as employ that precious season
as they ought, are very seldom unfortunate
in the event of things. Personal merit is
the noblest recommendation a young per-
son can carry out with him into the world.
The sycophant may forfeit the favour of
his patron; and be disappointed in his ex-
pectations; or, should he be gratified with
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them, may fill with disgrace the office to which he is promoted. Fortune may bestow her favours on the bad, and may raise from the dunghill the wretch void of all worth; but sterling abilities, in virtue and in action, bid fairest for success in all circumstances and situations. We wish to be served by the best tradesman in his profession, to deal with the honest merchant, to advise with the just counsellor, and skilful physician, and, if we have occasion for it, to trust the management of our affairs in the hands of a man of probity and good sense. We love to confer honour upon the wise, to assist the labours of the diligent, and to advance the interest of the virtuous. Merit may be born down by envy, it may languish in the shade under which modesty hath placed it, and may meet with unfortunate *times and chances*. Still, however, it is intrinsically excellent; lays open the most certain and honourable way to preferment, is liable to fewer accidents of disappointment, and hath besides such sources of inward support and relief, of independent joys and delight, that we cannot
strive,

strive, with too much ardour and perseverance, to obtain it.

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When we compare two men together, the one adorned with every accomplishment a well-spent youth can bestow, of good dispositions, of virtuous principles, of patient industry; the other slothful and profligate, his understanding neglected, his passions unsubdued, his habits vicious; can we hesitate one moment in deciding, which of them has the greatest probability of meeting with honour, success, and felicity, in this world? Without taking the future state of being into the account, the words of Isaiah apply to the present constitution of things: *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings: Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him* *.

3. As youth, considered in relation to manhood, is a probationary state, so the whole of life, considered in relation to futurity, is to be viewed in that great im-

* Isa. iii. 10, 11.

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portant light. God, as has been observed, hath so formed the plan of Providence, as in general to favour virtue, and to discourage wickedness. The exceptions, however, to this appointment, are numerous and striking; as acquaintance with the world, and the observation of past ages, can fully attest. *Mark me*, said Job, in his reply to Zophar the Naamathite, *mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth. Even when I remember, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh. Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power* *. Solomon observed, *There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness; and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness* †. He adds, in the same admirable treatise on the unsatisfactory nature and uncertainty of all sublunary enjoyments: *I returned, and I saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet fa-*

* Job, xxi. 5-7.

† Eccl. vii. 15.

your to men of skill; but time and chance SERM.
happeneth to them all.* XVI.

In order to provide a recompense for those who suffer by such contingencies, and to bring the affairs of the universe to a just and retributory balance, God hath appointed a day in which he will *judge the world with righteousness* †. The downfall of the wicked shall then take place, and they, whose merit has been neglected and despised, and whose distresses have been occasioned by their adherence to a good cause, will lift up their head in triumph. The virtuous and the sinful, who form at present a mixed society, living together as the wheat and the tares grow in the same field, shall then be separated from one another for ever. The pure will be gathered from the impure, the true from false, the wise from fools, the occupier of his talents from him who abused them, and the children of God from the servants of his adversary. The one shall be put in possession of the kingdom prepared for them from

* Eccl. ix. 11.

† Ps. xcvi. 13.

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*the foundation of the world**; the other, together with death and hell, shall be cast into the lake of fire †. This, which, in the language of scripture, is called, *the second death*, is the last, the irrevocable, judgment, into which God will bring all such as walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes; and do not remember him, and walk in his statutes.

The Christian motive to holiness, is taken from the consideration of the rewards and punishments, prepared for obedience, and disobedience, to the commandments of God. Our Saviour constantly appealed to, and reasoned from, it. He did not teach, that virtue was its own reward; that a good man could not be miserable in any possible situation, and that he ought to seek for no higher recompense, than the happiness arising from his own conscious approbation. To the pride of philosophy, and the folly of the schools, he left the defence of doctrines so unsuitable to the infirmity of human nature. He, on the contrary,

* Mat. xxv. 34.

† Rev. xx. 14.

taught,

taught, that virtue was often its own punishment, that the righteous were to meet with sorrows and tribulation, and that *hypocrites verily* had a present reward.

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He acted on these principles, and realised in practice the pure and sublime lessons of morality, which he delivered to his followers. *For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God**. He invites us to imitate his example, to adopt his rules of conduct, and to overcome as he overcame, that we may participate with him the celestial honours he acquired, in virtue of his conquest over the powers of darkness.

Nothing, surely, can be so animating a motive to the discharge of our duty, as the promise of glory and immortality conferred upon such terms as these. Admission into the society of the blessed is not to be obtained, by any arbitrary decision

* Heb. xii. 2.

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of our judge, by any respect of persons, or by any pre-eminence of blood, rank, wealth, and the like vain distinctions of mortals. These are all levelled, or abolished by death. By *character* we are to stand or fall. Personal worth and excellence, as they conferred the kingdom of heaven upon our elder *brother*, will, by the grace and mercy of God through him, confer it likewise on all his true and faithful disciples.

III. I shall, last of all, illustrate the argument used by Solomon in the text, for early piety: *Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* This I shall do in a few words.

Many in their youth, and even in later periods of their lives, indulge themselves in folly and sin, with the professed intention of acting afterwards a better part. *Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber; yet a little pleasure, a little profit, a little honour bought*
at

at the expence of virtue. They falsely imagine, that it is in their power to proceed a certain length in these forbidden paths, and for a given time and no more, and that they can stop when they please. This is a most dangerous, and often an irretrievable mistake, in the conduct of life. He who forsakes the service of his God, and allows himself to be seduced for a season, and that, too, the most important of all seasons, into the slavery of sin, has seldom the resolution to emancipate himself afterwards from its shame and misery. As he offers up his first fruits to Satan, and wastes his youth in the gratification of his sensual appetites, so he is disposed to continue in the same sinful course of behaviour, while his circumstances permit, and his health and spirits are good. Besides acquiring a taste for unlawful enjoyments that is constantly on the increase, he becomes regardless of religion, and loses all relish for that firm and unremitting exertion, without which we cannot excel. Should he, however, in the progress of
time,

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time, and from the experience of the miseries of vice, become sensible of his errors; the force of his evil habits would either so far embitter the comfort expected from his repentance, as to drive him back to the sinful ways of his heart, or make him have recourse to the Pharisaic expedients of studying to please God, while he lived in the habitual breach of his commandments.

The old age of a man, void of principle, and *accustomed to do evil*, is surely the most unfortunate period of his existence, for attempting the work of reformation. This, which is ever a hard undertaking, is attended with tenfold difficulties in that cold and dreary evening of his days, when, full of trouble and infirmities, he may say, *I have no pleasure in them*. It requires all the courage arising from the consciousness of virtue, and the hopes of religion, to support a man in the vigour of his mental faculties with propriety, should disease make its attack upon him, and *the dust be returning to the earth as it was*. But the old,
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grey-headed, worn-out sinner, who endeavours to correct and alter his manners, undertakes the task of *changing the spots of the leopard*, and washing the Ethiopian white. His wicked habits have been of so long a continuance, and are so deeply implanted in his nature; and, at the same time, his powers of self-government are so entirely weakened, that he cannot root out the one, or re-invigorate the other. If he be prevented, by the waste of his estate, or by the infirmities of his body, from proceeding in his ordinary career of vice, this incapacity to do evil no more deserves the name of repentance, than the confinement of a criminal in a dungeon. In both cases it arises from absolute necessity, and not from the choice of a heart broken and contrite from the sense of its sin, and desirous to return to its duty. If his vices be of such a kind, that he may continue in the commission of them even in old age, such as lying, deceiving, evil-speaking, avarice, and the like, he will never so much as think of mending his manners. His conscience

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having ceased to remonstrate, he will rest satisfied with his second, which has now become more powerful and pleasant to him than his first, nature.

Such indeed is the power of evil habit, and of self-deceit, in imposing upon us, that the wicked usually fall upon some means or another to quiet their minds, and to reconcile themselves unto their bad behaviour. *They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him*?*

Hence, from these and other causes, the most part of sinners die as they have lived. They are either fearless of the consequences

* Job, xxi, 11—13.

of disobeying God, or are incapable of re-
forming their manners, and commencing
a life of holiness.

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I conclude the discourse with the admirable advice given to youth by the son of Sirach.

My son, gather instruction from thy youth up; so shalt thou find wisdom till thine old age. Come unto her as one that ploweth and soweth, and wait for her good fruits; for thou shalt not toil much in labouring about her, but thou shalt eat of her fruits right soon. She is very unpleasant to the unlearned: he that is without understanding, will not remain with her. She will lie upon him as a mighty stone of trial, and he will cast her from him ere it be long. For Wisdom is according to her name, and she is not manifest unto many.*

My son, if thou wilt, thou shalt be taught; and if thou wilt apply thy mind, thou shalt be prudent. If thou love to hear, thou shalt

* Eccles. vi. 18—22.

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receive understanding; and if thou bow thine ear, thou shalt be wise. Stand in the multitude of the elders, and cleave unto him that is wise. Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee. And if thou seest a man of understanding, get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear the steps of his doors. Let thy mind be upon the ordinances of the Lord, and meditate continually in his commandments: He shall establish thine heart, and give thee wisdom at thine own desire.*

* Eccles. vi. 32—37.

S E R M O N XVII.

ON PROVIDENCE,

Considered as a Plan going on progressively
to Perfection.

[Preached before the Provincial Synod of *Merse* and
Tiviotdale, in the Church of *Kelso*, on *Tuesday*,
April 27, 1790.]

 PSALM cvi. 2.

*Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?
who can shew forth all his praise?*

BY attending to the three primary attri-
butes of God, we are enabled to form
some idea of the nature and operations of
Providence. The *power* which at first cre-
ated the world, still upholds it. The *wisdom*
which contrived all things, still superintends
and directs them, according to the pur-
poses of his will. The *goodness* which
F f 3 prompted

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prompted him to form infinite orders of beings, is continually exerted in providing for their happiness, suitably to their respective capacities of enjoying it. The providence of God is accordingly *powerful, wise, and good.*

Though God might have created all things in a state of perfection at once, he was pleased to adopt a different method. He made them in such a manner, and placed them in such a situation, as that they should advance to their perfection by *degrees*, according to their kinds. This gives another *essential character* to the plans of Providence, that they are *progressive.*

It is proposed, in the following discourse; first, to make some observations on the nature of providence, considered as going on *progressively to perfection*: secondly, to make some inferences from it, viewed in that great and important light.

In the first place, I am to make some observations on the nature of Providence, considered as going on progressively to perfection.

1. In Holy Scripture, creation itself is described as *a progressive work*. A certain portion of time was employed before it was finished, and the Almighty pronounced all things that he had made to be *very good**. It is still by degrees that every production of this world comes to perfection. Metals, minerals, precious stones, and all things dug out of the bowels of the earth, for the use and conveniency of life, have their regular growth. From small seeds, all the plants, shrubs, and trees, with which the face of nature is so richly adorned, grow up to their size, and acquire their infinitely varied properties. The animals, with which the earth, the air, the rivers, and unfathomable abysses of the ocean are peopled, proceed from their embryo-state to the measure of their perfection.

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Thus, in all the finer parts of the material system, a progress from *less* to *more*, accompanied with the acquisition of new properties, or with the unfolding of those which lay hid and dormant, is plainly and universally discernible. Some things merely *grow*;

* Gen. i. 31.

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others *grow and live*; and others *grow, live, and feel*. These detached and subsidiary systems, after arriving at their maturity, have their decline and dissolution. Nothing, however, is lost, and no blank left in the works of God. The wreck of minerals, vegetables, and animals, enters into new compositions, gives rise to other productions, and appears in fresh forms. Eternal duration is stamp'd on every thing made, and nothing but the arm of omnipotence can annihilate what the Omnipotent created.

2. That which holds true of man, considered as an individual, advancing from infantine weakness to manhood, is applicable to his species, viewed in their social and political capacity. From small and rude beginnings, society gradually enlarges and improves. Animals of different kinds appear scarcely more different creatures, than men in a state of barbarity and of civilization. In the former condition, they are hungry, helpless, naked savages; roaming like wild beasts in quest of prey, or gathering the spontaneous fruits of the earth;
without

without habitations, or any place of abode; destitute of laws, government, or the least idea of subordination; ignorant, cruel, fierce, vindictive, and superstitious. In the latter, they are fed, clothed, and lodged, in a manner becoming the exigencies and dignity of our nature. Arts and manufactures increase the pleasures and conveniences of life; and commerce, by facilitating the intercourse between distant nations, enables them reciprocally to share the advantages and produce of every varied region and climate. By wise laws, and the regular exertions of justice, security is afforded to the character, persons, and property, of mankind. Along with these political advantages, letters are cultivated, science improves, the elegant and ornamental arts are studied, and manners acquire all the polish, which such a concurrence of circumstances can bestow.

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It often however happens, that the body politic, after reaching a certain period of maturity, declines, like the natural body, and comes to an end. This may happen two ways. First, when there is some radical

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dical defect in the constitution, which hath in it the seeds of mortality. Secondly, when the wickedness and impiety of a people have arrived at such a pitch, as to incapacitate them from performing the duties of good subjects, and from defending themselves when attacked by rival and ambitious neighbours. New æras date their commencement, and a fresh career in society begins, from these downfalls of kingdoms and empires; on whose ruins, states are founded, which, having before them the precedents and misfortunes of past times, guard against their errors, and become more perfect. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that, by a series of revolutions and the experience of ages, the political condition of the world may at length come to a degree of improvement, beyond that of which at present we can form any conception.

3. But leaving the prosecution of this subject to legislators and statesmen, let us next consider mankind in their religious capacity, and mark their progress in that respect; restricting our observations to those
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who have been favoured with the light of revelation.

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It appears, from a passage in the book of Joshua, that polytheism had been the prevailing religion of mankind, and that the knowledge of the One only God had been lost, before the time that Abraham was commanded to depart out of *Ur of the Chaldees* *. God was pleased to reveal himself then unto him, and to make him the magnificent promise, That in him, and in his posterity, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed* †. The same grant was renewed to Isaac ‡, and to Jacob ||. That the descendants of the patriarchs disseminated the knowledge of God in many of the eastern nations, is highly probable, from their immemorial observance of the ritual badge of admission into the rights of the Abrahamic covenant.

The Israelites, by sojourning so long among the Egyptians, would tend to improve the religious sentiments of that

* Josh. xxiv. 2. † Gen. xxii. 18. ‡ Gen. xxvi. 4.
|| Gen. xxviii. 14.

people.

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people. Though the former imbibed many superstitious opinions from the latter, yet they would, in turn, communicate information in matters sacred, of which intelligent minds would avail themselves. The resort of learned strangers, in after-ages, to Egypt, the original seat of art and science, would contribute to spread a few rays of divine light among neighbouring nations. To this, and to the intercourse long after established betwixt that country and Palestine, we may ascribe the sublimer ideas of theology embraced by the Grecian philosophers, and thence adopted by the sages of Rome.

To the Israelites, after their departure from Egypt, the law of Moses was given. Of this new and splendid dispensation, the *unity* of the Godhead was the foundation and corner stone. In the decalogue, the great principles of piety and morality were inculcated under the form of positive commands of the Almighty. Explanatory of these, and additional to them, many excellent laws and statutes were enacted, of the same divine authority, and marked with a spirit of humanity

humanity and goodness, that has been of much benefit to other plans of legislation, and may improve all which may hereafter be formed.

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As the Almighty selected the children of Israel to be the repository of divine knowledge, they were accordingly distinguished from the rest of mankind by their civil and ecclesiastical polity, and by a style of manners arising from it. In their meats and drinks, in their purifications and various kinds of abstinency, in their sacred festivals, and in the ordinary habit of their lives, they differed from all the nations of antiquity. Their worship, notwithstanding the *spirituality* of its object, was performed with magnificent rites and ceremonies; and the state of the world, at the giving of the law, and for many ages after, rendered the yoke, of which St. Peter * complained, both a necessary and a salutary burden. After their settlement in the land of Canaan, inspired men rose in succession among them, who checked their propen-

* Acts, xv. 10.

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fity to superstition, strengthened the barriers raised by their constitution to protect them from the encroachments of idolatry, improved them in divine knowledge, and taught them more pure and spiritual views of their duty. Thus the religion under the law was in a state of *progressive improvement* from the times of Moses, till the last of the prophets.

There is reason to think that the influence of this divine information was not restricted to Judea. The maritime situation of that country, the wars, alliances, and commerce, of the Israelites, and, above all, their captivity and dispersions, could not fail in diffusing part of their religious sentiments and knowledge, among the nations connected by these means with them.

In the mean time, by a series of great and wonderful revolutions, the world was gradually preparing for the manifestation of a system of religion more perfect. Four mighty empires rose in succession upon the ruins of each other, with all of which the Israelites were connected by treaty or conquest.

quest. After being tributary to the kings of Babylon, they were at last vanquished by them, their government was subverted, and those who escaped from the sword, were carried into captivity for seventy years. The offices of trust and dignity, to which many of them were promoted during that unfortunate period, demonstrate the superiority of their knowledge, by which they rose so high in the favour of their conquerors. Daniel has preserved a *decree**, by which Nebuchadnezzar recognised the authority of the God worshipped by the Israelites.

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After the subversion of the Chaldean empire, we find the Jews in no less favour with the Persians; insomuch that their sacred vessels, though of great value, were restored, and they were authorised to return, and re-occupy their ancient country. During their continuance at Babylon, their peculiarities in life and manners, and chiefly their sublime ideas of the divine Nature and Providence, could not escape the notice of wise and philosophic minds.

* Dan. iii. 29.

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The ten tribes*, which composed the kingdom of Israel or Samaria, were dispersed among the provinces of that vast empire, from whence they never again returned. The same causes which preserved the Jews a *separate* people in the western world, from the fall of Jerusalem to this day, might prevent the descendants of these tribes from being mixed with the

* During the reign of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian monarch, after subduing the land of Gilead, the country beyond the Jordan, and that part of Galilee which lay next to it, carried away all the inhabitants captive into Assyria. 2 Kings, xv. 29. Joseph. Antiq. b. ix. ch. xi.

In the reign of Hoshea king of Israel, that kingdom was finally overthrown by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, and what remained of the ten tribes, were transported into Media and Persia. 2 Kings, xvii. 6. Joseph. Antiq. b. ix. ch. xiv.

It appears evidently from the Khoran, that there were principalities of the Jews in Arabia, at the time that Mohammed asserted he was a prophet. Harris's Collection of Voyages, vol. i. b. i. ch. ii. sec. 19. Note b. N^o. 2.

Benjamin de Tudela, a Jew, born and educated in Spain, travelled into the oriental countries in the year 1160, and returned 1173. Critics have disagreed as to the degree of credit with which his travels should be read. If what he relates be in general true, as some very learned men have supposed, he found remains of the Israelites in Persia, Media, Ethiopia, and Abyssinia. See Harris, vol. i. b. i. ch. ii. § 19.

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inhabitants of the oriental regions. Some of the early Europeans, who explored the coasts of India, or travelled by land to it, relate that remains of the dispersion of the Israelites were then to be found in the east.

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It is probable that from such sources flowed the knowledge of divine matters, for which the Magi, the Brachmans, and other eastern sages, have been so much renowned. Philosophers from Greece were anciently in use to travel into that region for sake of improvement; and thus through the medium of the Jews and Israelites, light, by various reflections, was diffused among many nations.

The settlement of the Greek colonies in Asia, and the conquests of Alexander the Great, and his successors, propagated, along with the learning of Greece, a language which was generally understood by people of education, and spoken in many countries of the east. Into that copious and elegant language the Old Testament was translated, with great accuracy, under the

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auspices of one of the kings of Egypt*.
This precious remain of antiquity is a clear proof, that the opinions of the Jews were in no small repute, and had their admirers among the most civilized people of these times.

Greece having given a language, Rome, by the wisdom of her councils, and the valour and discipline of her legions, achieved the bold and magnificent design of universal conquest, and gave peace to the world. An easy and secure intercourse was thus opened between all nations. The Jews spread themselves in great numbers over Italy, Greece, and Lesser Asia. Wherever they settled, they built synagogues, professed their religion, and made many proselytes from the Gentiles. Thus, in all the misfortunes, revolutions, and dispersions, of this people, we may perceive the hand of God making them instrumental to fulfil the purposes of his will.

In many countries, the improvement made in the arts and sciences was accom-

* Ptolemy Philadelphus.

panied

panied with the cultivation of law and government, and states were formed which have commanded the admiration of succeeding ages. The morals, however, of the people did not keep pace with these political advantages, and, perhaps in no period of time, were more corrupt and abandoned, than when Rome was sovereign of the world. The heathen religion, instead of being a support to virtue, was the cause of the utmost profligacy and wickedness. Every kind of vice, with which the worst of human characters have been stained; fraud and villainy; adultery and incest; violence, robbery, and murder; was ascribed to their gods. Their sacred rites and ceremonies were formed upon the model of such objects of worship, and were an open insult on all which is modest in sentiment and decent in behaviour. It is easy to see, that a total depravity of manners must be the unavoidable consequence of these things. This accordingly was the case. If St. Paul be thought to have drawn too strong a picture of their wickedness, particularly in the first chapter of his epistle

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to the Romans, let their own writers be consulted on the head, and with them let the grounds of appeal rest. Great was the necessity, and loud the demand, for a divine interposition, not only on account of the state of the heathen world, but of the gross corruptions introduced by the Jews into the laws and religion of Moses.

In this juncture of affairs, which has no parallel in the records of time either before or after it, did Jesus Christ make his appearance in this world. His coming was the consummation of past, and the commencement of new, ages. From beginnings small, and seemingly inauspicious, this plan of divine wisdom continued to expand and to flourish. The cross, which was to *the Jews a stumbling block*, and to *the Greeks foolishness*, drew the attention of good and discerning minds upon the character and religion of the divine person who suffered upon it. The Jewish profelytes, in all the provinces of the empire, eagerly embraced the more liberal and gracious terms of the Gospel. Their example was followed by multitudes of the more enlightened hea-

thens; till in the progress of time, in spite of the most fierce and bloody persecutions, Rome, in the plenitude of her power, and throughout the extent of her dominion, adopted in form the Christian faith.

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Christianity, though thus happily established, suffered, not long after, a great eclipse in the western world. We are not to ascribe this entirely to the vast riches and power lodged so improperly in the hands of ecclesiastics, and to the enterprising ambition and profound policy of the Roman pontiffs. The nations who overturned the empire, and settled themselves on her ruins, were entirely composed of fierce illiterate barbarians, who were incapable of understanding a religion which was pure, simple, and spiritual. Born and trained up in the grossest ignorance and superstition, their conversion was not attended at first with any sensible improvement in sacred knowledge, or with any change of manners. A tribe usually followed the example of their leader. If he embraced our holy faith, they were baptized along with him. If he apostatised, or was succeeded by an idola-

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trous chieftain, they relapsed into their former errors. In the total decline of learning, and during the deplorable darkness of the *middle* ages, the Clergy fell into a state of as great ignorance and superstition as the Laity. No doctrine was too absurd, and no legendary tale too improbable, for the one to support, and for the other to believe. In this condition of mankind, and from other collateral causes, the bishop of Rome rose to great power, spiritual and temporal, collected revenues from all the Christian states; and, in order to perpetuate his usurpations, claimed to be the vicerent of Christ, in whose hands the *key* of infallibility, and of sovereign authority in all matters pertaining to salvation, was lodged.

The conversion of the Romans, Greeks, and learned Asiatics, was an easy transition from the light of science and civilization, to the light of the Gospel. But the conversion of Savages and Barbarians could not have been effectuated in the same complete manner, without a miracle. Such a mean, God did not chuse to employ. In

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analogy with his other providential plans, he left them to emerge out of ignorance, and to arrive at religious improvements, in the ordinary way. This required time. By *degrees*, order grew out of this confusion, light arose from darkness, till, by the Protestant reformation, the religion of our Saviour shone forth with a splendor and glory with which it had never formerly appeared.

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While the western world was on the decline, a revolution took place in the east, which drew after it consequences of vast importance in the religious and political state of mankind. In the beginning of the seventh century, there arose in Arabia, a person, who asserted that he was commissioned from God, that he was a prophet*, and the Comforter, whom Christ had promised to *send* †, in order to *guide them into all truth*. This was Mohammed. That profound and subtle impostor composed his

* The Mohammedans compute their æra from the flight of Mohammed from Mecca, 16th July, A.D. 622. Pet. Rat. Temp. lib. vii. c. 13. † John, xvi. 7. 13.

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religion in a great measure out of the Law and Gospel. He was careful, however, to adapt it to the taste and passions of that voluptuous climate where he was born, the influences of which he himself felt with the utmost intensity. He commanded to propagate it by the sword; and so judicious were his plans, and so well-concerted his measures, that the third in succession from him was head of an empire which extended from the frontiers of India, westward, as far as Spain. In consequence of the high patronage afforded to the arts and liberal sciences, to trade and manufactures, under the splendid reign of the Khaliffs, the Mohammedans made large settlements over all the Indies, and the islands adjacent to them, where their religion still prevails.

By this change, Pagan and idolatrous nations made great progress in religious sentiments. They were reclaimed from the gross conceptions, and still grosser practices, of heathenism. They were brought to the knowledge and worship of God; they

they were instructed in the laws of Moses ; they were informed in the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

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Since the revival of the arts, sciences, and letters, a mighty change has taken place in the condition of mankind. Immense countries have been discovered, and settled by the more enlightened European nations. By going to and fro, knowledge has increased*. Commerce is now established and carried on upon a basis more broad and comprehensive, than in any former period of time. The gloom is fast dispelling, under which Christianity laboured. The foolish notions and superstitious practices of the dark ages are going into desuetude, and knowledge in every branch of it is on the increase. More generous and enlarged sentiments regarding the *rights of man*, are gaining ground. The times seem pregnant with great events, which, by the blessing of God, may at last give birth to a purer spirit of liberty, civil and religious, together with all the beneficial fruits arising from it, than has ever yet prevailed in the world.

* Dan. xii. 4.

II. From

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II. From the account which has been now given of Providence, I proceed to make the following remarks.

1. It is not matter of faith, or dubious speculation, but of absolute certainty, founded on demonstrative evidence, that goodness, wisdom, and power, exist in the first cause and sovereign Disposer of all things. As those primary attributes, like all his other perfections, admit of infinite degrees, the infinity of space and time can set no bounds to the variety, extent, and duration of his plans. Should those plans be constructed on the *principle* which we have been endeavouring to illustrate, the *ubiquity* and *eternity* of the Godhead afford room for their being carried on *progressively* to higher and still higher degrees of excellence, from their commencement to everlasting. Good and intelligent minds, according to their different orders, and in proportion to the rank which they hold in the scale of being, will thus find, in every stage of their existence, fresh materials, by means of which, to nourish, improve, and expand, all those divine sentiments which

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constitute the love of God. Yet such is the surpassing and paramount glory of the divine nature, that it will remain for ever infinitely exalted above all his creatures, in their endless and unlimited *progress towards perfection.*

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2. As the *law* * served as a *schoolmaster*, to prepare the world for the coming of Christ; so we are to consider the Jews as still contributing, though unknown to themselves, to promote the same end. In Christian countries, where they are settled, they are a standing miracle, in proof of the divinity and truth of our holy faith. Among Pagans, they are sowing the first seeds of religion, by their worship of God, and their ideas of Providence. These principles will grow to maturity, when clearer light shall shine upon them. When *the blindness which has happened to Israel* † shall be cured, and when *the fullness of the Gentiles shall have come in*; then too *shall Israel be saved*, and not only *look upon* ‡, but believe in, *him whom they have pierced.*

3. With the fall of the temporal power of Mohammed, and perhaps sooner, the

* Galat. iii. 24. † Rom. ii. 25, 26. ‡ John, xix. 37.

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fall of his erroneous doctrines will be involved, and the guilt of his imposture be brought to light. The conversion of his followers to Christianity, is an easier transition, than the conversion of any body of Heathens whatever to it. The reason of this is evident. The Mohammedans already worship the One only God, they believe in Moses and the Prophets, and allow that Jesus acted by a divine authority and commission. Their faith in Mohammed will be overturned, as soon as candid enquiry shall open their eyes to the vices of his character, to the licentiousness of his manners, and to his lying pretensions. They are, besides, in a subsidiary way, though to a far greater extent, promoting like ends with the Jews, in their dispersion, by diffusing the divine knowledge of which they are possessed. God, who can make *the remainder of wrath praise him* *, and even the wickedness of mankind subservient to the purposes of his will, may thus render them instrumental in facilitating the progress of Christianity over the immense and populous regions of the east.

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

4. In proportion as despotism and popery are on the decline, the protestant faith will grow strong and flourish. Ignorance and arbitrary power are the strong holds of error. Let these be demolished, let a fair field be allowed the Gospel, on which to display the charms of truth, and the advantages of piety and virtue, and it must prevail in the contest. From sound reasoning and candid inquiry no danger is to be apprehended. All that the sophistry of minute philosophers, that the sneer of infidels, and the forgeries of the wicked, could do, has been already tried. Christianity has hitherto withstood the attack, and remains firm and unshaken, like *mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever* *. Other forms of religion have flourished and passed away. The vision is sealed, the voice of prophecy has been long silent, and long has the temple of Jerusalem been laid in ruins. But our holy faith, neither limited to people and country, nor mortal by the lapse of time, possesses in itself a principle of life, against which *the*

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* Psalm cxxv. 1.

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gates of death and the grave shall never prevail.*

5. As we perceive a *progressive improvement* in the arts and sciences, and in every branch of useful and ornamental knowledge; have we not good reason to think, that religion is not an exception to so general and excellent a law? The ultimate object of these is to add to the pleasures and conveniences of this state of being. The end proposed by the other is to purify and exalt our nature, to confer upon us that happiness which flows from the practice of our duty, and to qualify us for the enjoyment of heaven. Are we then to imagine, that the science of life, glory, and immortality, is the only one which has already arrived at its *goal of perfection*? Are we to suppose that when we are only in the dawn of improvement of most of the arts, and have reached excellence in none of them, we are already possessed of a key, which can unlock to us all the treasures of divine information. When the departments of law and government are still, in the best

• Matt. xvi. 18.

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of constitutions, confessedly imperfect; when the knowledge of the works of creation is rapidly on the increase, yet how far, very far, from being complete; are we to presume, that we enjoy the meridian splendor of divine truth, and have attained the summit of what is contained in the revealed will of God?

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Impossible! We may rest assured, that there are treasures in the word of God not yet discovered, that there are truths not brought to light, difficulties not explained, and a spacious field, on which learning, criticism, and ingenuity, may exert themselves with great advantage, in order to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls.

My Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

For these important purposes, we are specially set apart and consecrated. It becomes us then, with all humility, to continue diligent in the manifestation of those truths which we know, and to persevere in our researches into that wonderful plan which *angels desire to look into* *. It was thus our forefathers

1 Peter, i. 12.

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emancipated themselves and their posterity from Popish tyranny and superstition, and delivered unto us that excellent constitution which we at present enjoy. Let us not, however, think that they left nothing to us to do, that they explored every source of divine knowledge, and reached the ultimate boundaries of it. While we abide diligent and faithful in the discharge of our pastoral duties, let us devote part of that time, which our sacred retirement from the pursuits of this world affords us, to the study of the sublimest of wisdom. Viewing Christianity as *a scheme going forwards progressively to perfection*, let us do all in our power to promote so great and glorious an end.

So may God, the fountain of all light, bless our pious labours with his grace and spirit; so may our ministry be useful; and so may we have many for a crown of joy and rejoicing in the day of the Lord! Amen!

THE END.

